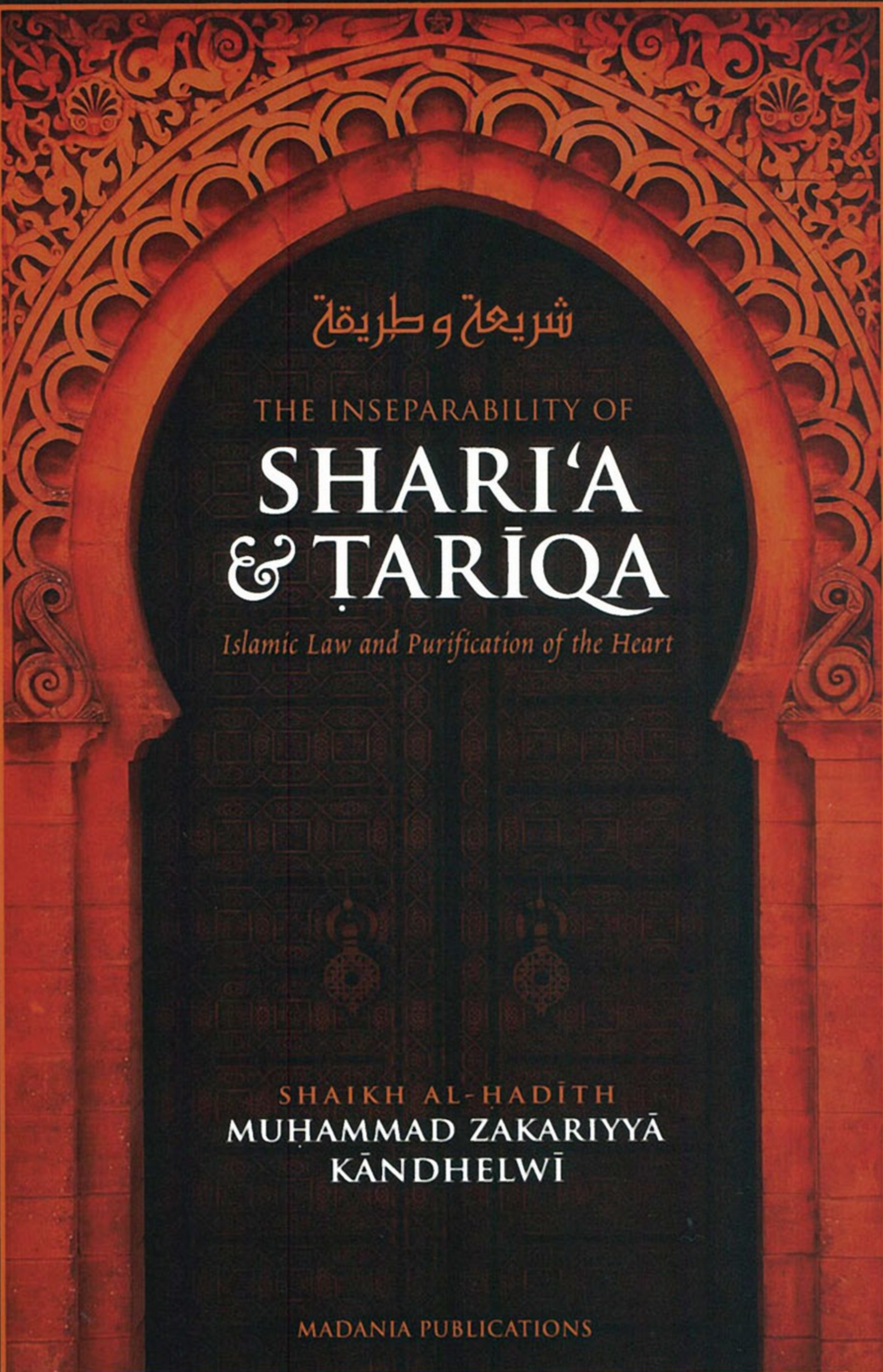


شريعة و طريقة

THE INSEPARABILITY OF

# SHARI'A & ṬARĪQA

*Islamic Law and Purification of the Heart*

SHAIKH AL-ḤADĪTH
MUḤAMMAD ZAKARIYYĀ KĀNDHELWĪ

MADANIA PUBLICATIONS

# Sharī'a & Ṭarīqa:

## Islamic Law and Purification of the Heart

*In the name of Allah; the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*

*All praise is due to Allah, Lord of all the worlds; and peace and blessings be upon the most Honorable of Messengers, Muḥammad, and upon his family and companions, and all those who follow them in righteousness, until the Day of Judgment.*

*Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are all for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds...*

# Sharī'a & Ṭarīqa:

## Islamic Law & Purification of the Heart

Shaikh al-Ḥadith
*Muḥammad Zakariyyā Kāndhelwī*

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رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ

*And, our Lord, raise in their midst a Messenger from among them, who should recite to them Your verses, and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and make them pure.* (2:129)

# Acknowledgements

I owe this translation to my upbringing by my loving and wise parents, to the blessings of my shaikh, and to the beautiful spiritual environment of Darul Uloom al-Madania. After that, I cannot forget Meekail Smith, Mrs. Osman, my sister Mrs. Aḥmad, Amir Bashir, Hasan Shibly and the many others who made this book come true. May Allah ﷾ bless them all and may He secure a place for them in the everlasting abode of Paradise.

# Transliteration Key

ء (إ أ) ‘(the *hamza* is produced by a sudden stop in the airstream similar to the sound in the middle of the exclamation, *uh-oh*.)
ا *a*, *ā*
ب *b*
ت *t*
ث *th* (is pronounced like the *th* in *thick* and *thumb*)
ج *j*
ح *ḥ* (a heavy *h* sound produced in the center of the throat)
خ *kh* (a guttural *k* sound produced in the upper throat and sounding similar to the *ch* in German as in *Bach*.)
د *d*
ذ *dh* (is pronounced like the *th* in *though* and *thus*)
ر *r*
ز *z*
س *s*
ش *sh*
ص *ṣ* (an emphatic *s*)
ض *ḍ* (an emphatic *d*)
ط *ṭ* (an emphatic *t*)
ظ *ẓ* (an emphatic *dh*)
ع ‘, *‘a*, *‘i*, *‘u* (produced in the center of the throat)
غ *gh* (a guttural *g* sound produced in the upper throat)
ف *f*
ق *q* (a heavy *k* sound)
ك *k*
ل *l*
م *m*
ن *n*
و *w*
ه *h*
ي *y*, *ī*, *i*

رضي الله عنها *Raḍiya Allahu ‘anhā*—may Allah سبحانه وتعالى be pleased with her (used following mention of a female companion of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ)

رضي الله عنه *Raḍiya Allahu ‘anhu*—may Allah سبحانه وتعالى be pleased with him (used following mention of a male companion of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ)

رضي الله عنهم *Raḍiya Allahu ‘anhum*—may Allah سبحانه وتعالى be pleased with them (used following mention a group of companions of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ)

ﷺ *Ṣallallahu ‘alaihi wa Sallam* – may the peace and blessings be upon him (used following mention of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ)

سبحانه وتعالى *Subḥanahū wa Ta‘ālā* – He who is sublime and High

عليه السلام *‘alaihi al-Salām* - may peace be upon him (used following mention of prophets)

# 2

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# Foreword

*In Shariʿa and Ṭarīqa,* Shaikh Zakariyyā strives to raise awareness of the ignorance and liberal mindedness that has become entrenched in Muslim society and that has become a part of mainstream Islamic thought in our times. He attributes his own upbringing amongst god-fearing and pious people as having saved him from the mindset common in the present day, in which many Muslims feel no compunction in objecting against the pious and learned. It is not uncommon to have heard someone we know personally questioning the character of the Companions and raising objections about the internal conflicts between them.

The introduction discusses the names, lives and time periods of the great scholars who helped build the sheikh's own character and *īmān*. He explains through his personal example why the *Dīn* is not learned through books or scholars alone; instead, it is learned through good examples and pious company. Many of the objections raised about the Companions, the question of *taqlīd*, and other subjects discussed in *Shariʿa and Ṭarīqa* are essentially due to both the lack of pious company and a lack of the qualities which such company produces, such as *taqwā* (piety), sincerity, humility etc. As Shaikh Zakariyyā himself says in another chapter, 'One of the main reasons for sending prophets was that they embodied the meaning of their revealed books and demonstrated it in their practical life.' In other words, Allah could have revealed the books directly upon the people and left it to them to read and apply it in their lives. Instead, He sent prophets and in doing so showed us that the method of gaining *Dīn* is

not in reading books but in keeping pious company. The understanding of *Dīn* that is gained from the company of the god-fearing eliminates doubt in the heart, lack of *īmān*, and insincerity which gives rise to objections, argumentation, and indifference towards the Dīn. This is why Allah ﷻ emphasizes sitting in the company of the pious. He says,

*O ye who believe! Fear Allah and be with those who are true* (*in word and deed*).[1]

In the first and second chapter, Shaikh Zakariyyā reveals the ignorance of modernists and the reason for the rise of many deviated sects in our times. In narrating the fields that are necessary to master before one can be qualified to interpret the Qur'an and Sunna, he makes it clear that many of those who lay claim to spreading the Qur'an and Sunna, and who hold gatherings where the Qur'an is translated and explained, do not in fact fulfill the prerequisite conditions. It is easy to understand then how such people are ignorant and are following their own desires in the guise of the Qur'an and Sunna.

In succeeding chapters, Shaikh Zakariyyā turns his attention to one of the most controversial issues of our times. Many have called for a need for dialogue on this issue, but Shaikh Zakariyyā explains that following an imam in our time is more important now than in the preceding centuries. It is only ignorance of our own lack of knowledge which leads us to think that we can lead life as practicing Muslims without following an imam. In the past, Muslims recognized their own ignorance and the importance of following an imam was clear to them. Shaikh Zakariyyā speaks passionately and at length on this subject, drawing from all of the critical sources to prove his argument: Qur'an, Sunna, scholars, history, personal experiences, and anecdotes.

With the main areas of Shari'a discussed, he takes the reader through a detailed analytical study of Taṣawwuf. Again, he addresses many of the misunderstandings arising from an ignorance of Taṣawwuf and provides detailed evidence of the meditative devotions and exertions used in Taṣawwuf, upon which he then ends the book. He also establishes the middle ground between the two groups who fall into excessiveness [*ifrāṭ*] and remissness [*tafrīṭ*] in this matter. One group rejects Taṣawwuf outright and considers it a blatant innovation in the Dīn. The second group downplays the importance of Shari'a and thinks the spiritual states and ecstatic experiences of Taṣawwuf are themselves the ultimate objective.

Throughout his discourse, he switches between evidence, anecdotes, scholarly discussion, experience, and knowledge, helping the reader to stay engaged in what is a difficult but extremely important subject.

One of the main themes of this book, as one will note [with the author consistently referring to past recent scholars, history, and the pious predecessors] is that the community [*umma*] cannot turn its back on the tradition of the pious predecessors and draw new patterns of following the Qur'an and Sunna; it must hold on to the ways of the pious predecessors in order to stay on the straight path.

## HOW TO READ THE BOOK

To derive full benefit and enjoyment from this book it is important to understand many of the terms that are used repeatedly [some more, some less] throughout the book. Though many new terms are introduced in *Shari'a and Ṭarīqa*, the terms listed below are different in that they are essential to understanding the purpose of the book. The example of these terms is like how the oneness of Allah ﷻ and the prophethood of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ are essential to understanding Islam. We ask that the readers familiarize themselves with these terms and include them in their vocabulary before they begin reading *Shari'a and Ṭarīqa*.

## SHARI'A

### **An Independent Jurist** [*Mujtahid*]

Mujtahid derives from the root word *juhd,* which means 'to exert.' In Islamic terminology, a mujtahid is a jurist who is bestowed with the ability to derive rulings from the Qur'an and Sunna. In one hadith, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ explains:

> Whoever Allah ﷻ wishes good for, He blesses them with understanding in the Dīn.[2]

Some of the points gained from this hadith are:

A mujtahid does not gain deep understanding of the Dīn through his effort or by mastering the different sciences of Qur'an and Sunna. This

deep understanding is a gift of Allah ﷻ which He grants to whomever He wills. In this way, we see a likeness between the mujtahids and prophets in so far as that the mujtahids are also chosen by Allah ﷻ. They do not achieve their position by hard work and effort but are granted it by the will of Allah ﷻ.

Knowledge can be gained through books and people but a true understanding of Dīn comes from Allah ﷻ alone. Even if one dedicates his whole life to gaining knowledge of Dīn, he cannot be a mujtahid.

A deep understanding in Dīn is a gift of Allah ﷻ; He gives this gift to His most devout believers and those who have attained a high level of *taqwā,* īmān, and piety. Though a deep understanding of Dīn is not given on the basis of *taqwā* and īmān [otherwise most of our pious predecessors would have been mujtahid], it is true that He blesses the people whom he grants the gift of deep understanding with piety, taqwā and sublime characters. This is similar to how Allah ﷻ grants prophethood to those whom He blesses with the best of character and the highest level of īmān and taqwā; though it is His prerogative to grant prophethood to whomever He wills.

We learn from the above discussion that the mujtahids were exalted because of two qualities: their deep understanding of Dīn and secondly, the purity of their hearts and their exemplary character. They were blessed with the qualities of love for Allah ﷻ, love for the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, humility, sincerity, taqwā, benevolence, altruism, sacrificing for others, lack of pretension, etc. Though they are known less for their second quality than for the first, their personal lives [and those who have read their biographies would know] are as much a source of guidance and inspiration for the community as their rulings in the books.

The four imams differed in thousands of issues but despite that, they never debased each other or stopped their students from sitting in one another's gatherings. They respected and praised each other even before their students. Therefore, we see that the student of one imam may be the teacher or student of another. For example, Imam Muḥammad was the student of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa and also the teacher of Imam Shāfi'ī. Imam Muḥammad, who was one of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa's main students, and who first compiled his rulings in five books, was also a student of Imam Mālik.

These facts reflect the greatness of their character and the sincerity of their work and dedication to the Dīn. When compared to their noble example, we observe that difference of opinion in our time leads only to sectarianism and hatred. Thus, we become aware of the decadent spiritual

condition of our community today. Without purity of heart, taqwā, and sincerity our differences of opinion today have become a war of egos.

No one had a deeper understanding in Dīn than the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. Yet, on certain occasions the Blessed Prophet ﷺ himself was corrected through revelation [e.g. prisoners in the battle of Badr] of a mistake in his ijtihād. This point illustrates that deep understanding in Dīn doesn't necessarily mean that one is always right. A difference of opinion, as amongst the mujtahids, indicates that rightness is not biased in favor of any one imam. One imam may be right in one issue while another imam in another issue.

### Taqlīd

The person not bestowed with a deep understanding of Dīn will practice *taqlīd*. *Taqlīd* is following the mujtahid without asking for proof and accepting that the mujtahid possesses proof for his ruling. An example of *taqlīd* is like going to the doctor when we are sick. When the doctor prescribes something for us, we don't question him and demand proof and explanations as to why he prescribed one medicine and not another.

### Muqallid

A person who practices *taqlīd*.

### Madhhab

Madhhab means a path or way. It conventionally refers to the four schools of Imam Shāfiʿī, Imam Abū Ḥanīfa, Imam Mālik, and Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal. Though other madhhabs existed in the earlier Islamic era, their muqallids died out and very few of the rulings of their imams were preserved in the books. As a result, the word madhhab became largely associated with the above mentioned four madhhabs only.

## TAṢAWWUF—ṬARĪQA

Taṣawwuf is comprised of two essential parts: a shaikh and, secondly, meditative devotions and exertions. The purpose of the shaikh and meditative devotions and exertions is to help a seeker attain the level of iḥsān and to remove all obstacles that come between the seeker and his destination [the attainment of iḥsān]. Some of these obstacles are hatred,

jealousy, arrogance, anger, love for wealth, love for the self, etc. Four things are required in order for a seeker to gain maximum benefit from his shaikh:

1. Trust in the spiritual mentor [*i'tiqād*]
2. Adherence [*ittibā'*]
3. Submissiveness [*inqiyād*]
4. To inform [*iṭṭilā'*]

Trust [*i'tiqād*] in the mentor is like a bridge by which the seeker gains the next three qualities and progresses in attaining iḥsān. There is nothing between the mentor and the seeker without trust.

To acquire the attributes of adherence [*ittibā'*] and submissiveness [*inqiyād*], love for the shaikh, is essential. The more love one has for his mentor the more benefit he will gain from him. This is why the books of Taṣawwuf often emphasize the importance of love for the shaikh.

Adherence [*ittibā'*] is that the seeker is consistent in performing the meditative devotions [*ashgāl*] and exertions [*mujāhadāt*] prescribed by his mentor.

Submissiveness [*inqiyād*] is that the seeker does not question his mentor nor does he raise objections in his mind or heart against him. Objections against the mentor are the main cause for deviation of the seeker, as they are a sign of arrogance in his heart.

To inform [*iṭṭilā'*], is to keep the spiritual mentor informed of his spiritual states, his performance in the devotions, and any other information that helps the mentor understand the condition of the seeker.

Other names for Taṣawwuf are: *tazkiya*, Sulūk, ṭarīqa, īḥsān, ḥaqīqa, *'ilm al-adab*, and *'ilm al-akhlāq*.

## **Pledging Allegiance With the Shaikh** [*Bai'a*]

*Bai'a* is not essential to Taṣawwuf. It is only to signify the importance upon which the bai'a is made, which is abidance by the Shari'a. Otherwise the main components of Taṣawwuf are as mentioned above. Abidance by the Shari'a means to abstain from all sins, major and minor, and to fulfill all the requirements and laws of Shari'a. Through the *bai'a*, the shaikh vows to help guide the seeker in reaching the aforementioned objectives while the seeker takes the responsibility of adherence and submissiveness to the shaikh. He also agrees to keep his shaikh informed of his spiritual condition and developments.

## **Remembrance of Allah** [*Dhikr*]

The main tool by which iḥsān is achieved is dhikr of Allah ﷾. The dhikr of Allah ﷾ is the core of all meditative devotions in Taṣawwuf. It is performed with certain restrictions and in different methods to produce the effects that eventually bring about iḥsān. The four paths of Naqshbandiyya, Chishtiyya, Suharwardiyya, and Qādiriyya all prescribed their own methods of performing dhikr of Allah ﷾.

## **Iḥsān**

In the hadith of Jibrā'īl, iḥsān is defined as, "worship Allah ﷾ as if you see Him, and if this is not so, then that He is seeing you." It is important to note that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ did not say, "Know that Allah ﷾ sees you", because iḥsān is not an intellectual attainment but a conscious state of awareness of Allah ﷾ that is born in the heart.

Iḥsān is the highest level of *īmān*. Taṣawwuf and all its parts [bai'a to a mentor and the meditative devotions and exertions] are for the sole objective of achieving iḥsān. Iḥsān was easily achieved in the time of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ through obligatory acts, recitation of Quran, and by being in the blessed company of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. As the spiritual condition of the community deteriorated over time, the level of iḥsān could no longer be attained in the same manner and through the same acts as it was in the time of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. Thus, the spiritual masters developed new methods [meditative devotions and exertions] to help attain the level of iḥsān.

The example of meditative devotions and exertions are like the *muṣḥaf* [hard copy] of the Qur'an. There was no *muṣḥaf* in the time of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, nor is there any evidence of it in the Qur'an and Sunna, yet never has controversy arisen about it being an innovation. This is because the community understands that is a necessary means of achieving an order of Allah ﷾, which is preservation of the Qur'an. One will find numerous examples of such acts [traditional schools, books on Dīn, etc.] of which there is no evidence from the Qur'an and Sunna but which are necessary only because they are a means of achieving an order of Allah ﷾ and have thus gained the consensual acceptance of the whole community.

The meditative devotions and exertions devised by the spiritual masters fall under the same category of acts that help achieve an order of Allah ﷾, which is the achievement of iḥsān. It is essential to note here that these acts are a means to an objective and are not objectives in themselves. Therefore, if somebody takes them as objectives, he is innovating in the Dīn.

## **Meditative Devotions** [*Shugl-Asghāl*][3]

Shugl linguistically means to be occupied in something. Any type of meditative devotion prescribed to train the heart in keeping busy with remembrance of Allah ﷿ and eventually achieving iḥsān is called shugl.

## **Uttered Devotions** [*Aurād*]

Uttered devotions are the devotions in which only the tongue is occupied in the remembrance of Allah ﷿ and which in meditation of the heart is not required. This includes the *tasbīḥāt* [*subḥān Allāh, al-ḥamd li Allāh, Allāh akbar*] and other such devotions.

## **Spiritual Exertions** [*Mujāhada-Mujāhadāt*]

Any type of effort or exertion [whether prescribed by the shaikh or not] that is used to help suppress and dominate the lower self [*nafs*] is called a *mujāhada*. The four major categories of *mujāhadāt* are minimal talking [*qillat al-kalām*], minimal sleep [*qillat al-manām*], minimal socialization [*qillat al-ikhtilāṭ maʿ al-Anām*], and minimal eating and drinking [*qillat al-ṭaʿām*].

## **Reality** [*Ḥaqīqa*]

*Ḥaqīqa* means reality. Imam Qushairī says:

> Shariʿa is servitude to Allah ﷿ whereas ḥaqīqa is observation of the lordship of Allah ﷿. Shariʿa is to worship Him while ḥaqīqa is to see Him. Shariʿa is to implement His order whereas ḥaqīqa is to observe His decree.

Shaikh Thānwī says:

> After the heart of the seeker is purified and illuminated [through dhikr of Allah ﷿], certain realities of the corporeal and non-corporeal are made evident to him; more specifically, the reality of good and bad deeds, the reality of Allah ﷿ in His attributes and His dealings, especially those between Him and His servants.

For example, one is knowledge of an apple and one is the reality that one gains after seeing and tasting an apple. Likewise, when the heart is

purified, the realities explained of the transient world and the Hereafter in the Qur'an and Sunna become plain and clear to the seeker.

### **Bond** [*Nisba*]

Nisba literally means bond or relation. In Taṣawwuf, nisba refers to the intimate bond that forms between a servant and his Creator after a seeker traverses the path of Taṣawwuf. The example of nisba [these examples are only to bring the meaning of terms closer to our understanding and do not in any way express the reality of these meanings] is like the special bond a mother has with her own child. Though she is kind and loving to all children, the love, kindness, and affection she has for her own child [which is born out of the special bond she has with her child] is altogether different.

When a seeker achieves this nisba he performs the obligatory, necessary, and Sunna acts with the type of earnestness and energy that is usually reserved for things of a worldly nature, as he seeks nothing but the pleasure of his Creator.

### **Sulūk**

Sulūk is the traversing of a path. There are two paths in Taṣawwuf: the path of Sulūk and the path of *jadhb*. The path of Sulūk takes one towards Allah تعالى through spiritual exertions and devotions. Once one becomes steadfast and consistent with his devotions, he attains the nisba of Allah تعالى by which the path of Sulūk is traversed with ease.

The path of *jadhb* means that a person attains the nisba of Allah تعالى without effort or will. Though it is defined as a "path" in Taṣawwuf terminology, it is actually a bestowal of Allah تعالى, and few people are chosen for this path. The person on the path of *jadhb* is called *majdhūb*. A *majdhūb* is in a heightened spiritual state that effects his senses and intellect, by which he may lose his senses and is often mistaken for an insane person.

The terms Sulūk and ḥaqīqa are used interchangeably with Taṣawwuf, the difference between them being that Taṣawwuf is like the vehicle, Sulūk is the path, and ḥaqīqa the fruits of this path. None are objectives; the only objective is attainment of iḥsān.

### **Perpetual Spiritual State** [*Maqām—Muqāmāt*]

A maqām linguistically means a station. In Taṣawwuf terminology, it is the perpetuating of certain spiritual qualities in the heart through exertions. Reaching a maqām is another way of saying that the seeker has

attained a particular quality. Many times, achieving one maqām is a requirement for the attainment of another. For example, a seeker cannot reach the maqām of trust in Allah ﷻ [*tawakkul*] until the maqām of contentment [*qanāʿa*] is achieved. Likewise, the maqām of complete obedience to Allah ﷻ [*ināba*] cannot be established until one has achieved the maqām of repentance [*tauba*].

### **Temporal Spiritual State** [*Ḥāl-Aḥwāl*]

Ḥāl in Arabic means a state or condition. In Taṣawwuf, ḥāl is defined as the state or condition of a seeker after the passing of an involuntary thought or meaning [through the heart] or after a sudden and overwhelming feeling– as in euphoria [*ṭarab*] or grief [*ḥuzn*]– overtakes the seeker. Aḥwāl are differentiated from perpetual spiritual states in that temporal spiritual states are from Allah ﷻ and are temporary while perpetual states are achieved through exertions and are continual.

### **Descent of a Spiritual Meaning** [*Wārid-Wāridāt*]

A wārid derives from the root word *warada* which means 'to arrive at' or 'to come to.' In Taṣawwuf, a wārid is the descent of a feeling into the heart from Allah ﷻ or an epiphany that manifest realities of something and increases ones knowledge of a particular reality. A wārid can strain the heart severely enough to incapacitate or even bring on death.[4]

## ENDNOTES

1 9:119

2 Bukhārī, *al-ʿIlm Qabl al-Qaul wa al-ʿAmal*

3 Where two words are parenthesized the first is singular and the second plural.

4 Definitions are taken from *Sharīʿa and Tarīqat* [Shaikh Ashraf ʿAlī Thānwī] and *al-Risālat al-Qushairiyya* [ʿAbd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin al-Qushairī].

الله

# Introduction

## THE SCHOLARS OF DEOBAND[1]

*All praise* is due to Allah ﷾ and peace and blessings be upon the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. This useless person [the author] was born on the 11th of Ramadan, 1315/1898[2] at 11 p.m. in my mother's step-grandmother's house in the town of Kāndhela, India. My mother's step-grandmother was known by the name of Maryam. She was a worshipful, austere, and extremely generous woman. The elders of Kāndhela came to her home immediately after the Ramadan ṣalāt [*tarāwīḥ*], congratulated her, and called for sweets. She ordered the sweets and gave them out generously to her guests. The house was full of hustle-bustle and joy on that day.

The town of Kāndhela is situated in Muzaffarnagar District. *Du Āba,*[3] the popular name for this area in the past and a name which is widely used to this day, was once a center of Shari'a [Divine Law] and Taṣawwuf. This name is often found in the writings and speeches of our elders. This area includes Delhi, Mīrat, Muzaffarnagar, and Sahāranpūr districts [Uttar Pradesh, India]. *Du Āba* geographically refers to the area between the confluence of the famous Yamuna River which flows from the west and the Ganges River that merges in from the east.

This area was a fountainhead of Shari'a and Taṣawwuf which began with the noted family of Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī[4] whose spiritual outpouring [*faiḍ*] spread through the spiritual family of al-Ḥāj Imdād Allāh.[5] One of the smallest effects of the blessing of this area was that the most unlettered of Shaikh Gangohī's[6] spiritual students [*murīds*] became strict adherents of the Sunnas. I saw some of the most illiterate village people devoted to the nightly ṣalāt [*tahajjud*] in a way unparalleled even

amongst the elders. This was the situation of this blessed area in matters of Shari'a.

As for Taṣawwuf, fifty-six washer men would gather by the famous Gadda Pond next to Shaikh Gangohī's sanctum [*khānqā*]. Instead of singing or humming, they would chant the name of Allah ﷻ loudly. I myself have never met anyone from Shāh Walī Allāh's family, though I did meet many of the elders and younger members of the spiritual family of al-Ḥāj Imdād Allāh.

I never saw Shaikh al-Ḥāj Imdād Allāh because he passed away only two years after my birth on the 12th or 13th of Jumāda al-Thānī in 1317/1899, in Makka. Likewise, I did not meet the Proof of Islam, Shaikh Nānautwī,[7] as he had passed away eighteen years before my birth on the 4th of Jumāda al-Awwal, 1296/1879. Similarly, I never met Shaikh Muḥammad Ismā'īl Jhanjhāhnwī[8], Kāndhelwī, then Dehlawī because he passed away in Delhi in Nawāb Walī Masjid on the 4th of Shawwāl, 1315/1898, approximately twenty days after my birth. I heard from our elders that when my [paternal] grandfather heard the news of my birth he said, "My replacement has come and now it is time for my departure." I have heard numerous stories about the elders of the Imdād Allāh family.

I met Shaikh Gangohī many times because he passed away when I was eight years old on the 8th of Jumāda al-Thānī, 1323/1905 in Gangoh [U.P., India]. I clearly recall his countenance and how he sat cross-legged on the grounds of the sanctum. Once he wrapped his hands around me and embraced me [I remember eating with him on various occasions and sitting with him in a palanquin carried by the greatest spiritual mentors (*shuyūkh*) of the time to the 'Eid prayer area]. This was the enlightened era of Shari'a and Taṣawwuf.

After that I had the opportunity to stay with my spiritual mentor, the Venerable Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī,[9] from Rajab 1328/1910 to Dhu al-Qa'da 1345/1926, excluding the year in which Shaikh al-Hind [Shaikh Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan[10]] and my Shaikh Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī were in Ḥijāz [region of Makka and Medina]. I left Madina on the 16th of Dhu al-Qa'da 1345/1927 whereas my spiritual mentor passed away [approximately five months later] in Madina on the 16th of Rabī' al-Thānī 1346/1927. Although I was present during the lifetime of Shaikh al-Hind Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan [he passed away on the 18th of Rabī' al-Awwal 1339/1920], I saw little of him as he was in prison for many years in Malta. The only times I saw him was when he visited Deoband before and after his imprisonment. However, I met his students, spiritual students and the elders of Deoband numerous times.

I also saw much of Shāh ʿAbd al-Raḥīm[11] before he passed away on the 24th of Rabīʿ al-Thānī 1338/1920. I also had the opportunity to spend a lot of time with "The One Who Linked the Younger Spiritual Mentors to the Older Ones" [*mulḥiq al-aṣāghir bi al-akābir*], Shaikh Ashraf ʿAlī Thānwī, as he passed away on the 12th of Rajab 1362/1943. I attach the title of "*mulḥiq al-aṣāghir bi al-akābir*" to his name because Shaikh Thānwī[12] gained his successorship [*khilāfa*] from al-Ḥāj Imdād Allāh, which means that he was the primary link between the younger generation of seekers [*murīds*] and successors [*khulafā*] and the older generation of mentors [i.e. al-Ḥāj Imdād Allāh, Ḥāfiẓ Ḍāmin, Shaikh Muḥammad Thānwī etc.].

In Shariʿa, Shaikh Thānwī obtained permission [*ijāza*] of hadith from Shaikh Faẓl al-Raḥmān Ganj Murādabādī[13] who obtained permission from Shāh ʿAbd ʿAzīz.[14] Therefore, it is narrated in the book *Arwāḥ-e-Thalātha*[15] that Ḥakīm Niʿmat Allāh asked Shaikh Ganj Murādabādī, "Has the Shaikh read any aḥādīth from Shāh ʿAbd al-Azīz?" "Yes," he replied. Ḥakīm Niʿmat Allāh said, "If you give me permission [to transmit these aḥādīth], I will also gain the blessings of this chain." After narrating a few aḥādīth from *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*,[16] he [Shaikh Ganj Murādabādī] said, "I give you permission." After that, he advised me about the importance of practicing upon one's knowledge.

I always desired to get permission from Shaikh Thānwī to gain his high chain [*sanad*] and even journeyed many times to Thāna Bavan for this purpose, but was too ashamed to ask. How was I going to ask for permission when I didn't even know anything? Though I never obtained a chain from Hazrat Thānwī, many of my own students did, thus gaining a higher chain than myself.

Furthermore, I saw much of the life of Shaikh of Islam, Shaikh Ḥussain Madanī[17] before he passed away on the 12th of Jumāda al-Awwal 1377/December 4, 1957 in Deoband. I also observed the life of my guardian, the Imam of Humility, Shaikh ʿAbd al-Qādir Raipūrī[18] because he passed away on the 14th of Rabīʿ al-Awwal, 1382/August 15, 1962. I was fortunate to sit in his company on numerous occasions. I also spent a great deal of time with my respected uncle, the Imam of *Tablīgh*, Shaikh Ilyās[19] because he passed away on the 21st of Rajab 1363/July 12, 1944.

I needed to mention the era of these spiritual mentors to show that every inch of Du Āba was a center of Shariʿa and Taṣawwuf through the blessings of these guiding lights and that we inherited the understanding of the inseparable nature of Shariʿa and Taṣawwuf from them.

## THE INSEPARABILITY OF SHARI'A AND TAṢAWWUF

Thus, the understanding of the oneness of Shari'a and Taṣawwuf was embedded in me from childhood and became an indelible part of my nature. It is a rule that whatever makes its mark during childhood is like 'carving on a stone.' Though most people have never witnessed a lion tearing the flesh of its prey or a snake when it bites, no one can remove the fear and terror associated with such thoughts as they are embedded from childhood.

During my student years when I was studying *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, I read the famous hadith of Jibra'īl ﷺ. He came to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ to teach mankind the basics of Dīn. After īmān and Islam we read:

مَا الْإِحْسَان قَالَ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللّٰهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ

"What is iḥsān?"
The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied,
"To worship Allah ﷻ as if you see him."[20]

This is the essence of Taṣawwuf and Sulūk. Both these [Taṣawwuf and Sulūk] and any other name given to this blessed science all come under the fold of iḥsān. Then, as I continued studying different books of aḥādīth, I became so convinced of the inseparable nature of Shari'a and Taṣawwuf that if I heard anything against it, I considered it ignorance and indifference towards the subject. Likewise, if I ever heard anything against the pure and pristine Shari'a, which is derived from the Qur'an; the Sunna of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, which is the most authoritative exposition of the Qur'an; and then fiqh [Islamic jurisprudence], which is the pith of both the Qur'an and Sunna, I disregarded it and thought it unworthy of my time.

When I heard some people, ignorant in matters of Dīn, say, "Whatever immediate meaning we understand from the Qur'an is the true meaning, there is no need for all these exegeses [*tafāsīr*]," I thought it insane. If it was truly that easy to deduce meanings from the Qur'an, then what was the need to send a prophet of Allah ﷻ? The Qur'an could have been hung from the Ka'ba and people could have taken whatever meaning they understood from it. One of the main reasons for sending prophets was that they embodied the meaning of their revealed books and demonstrated it in their practical life. Through them, the Dīn was given a perfect complete form and became a 'way of life.'

## THE BLESSED PROPHET ﷺ WAS MADE TO FORGET

In this regard, it is Allah ﷻ's great blessing upon me that I never doubted any of the injunctions or rulings of the Shariʿa. I had gained insight [*baṣīra*] into the rules and matters of Shariʿa in a way that left no room for doubt. This is because the Blessed Prophet ﷺ came to this world to give the Shariʿa a practical shape. Therefore, he was made to perform certain acts which fulfilled the objective [of putting the Shariʿa in a practical shape] without relegating his status as a prophet of Allah ﷻ.

For example, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and his Companions ﷺ once missed Fajr while on a journey [this is in juxtaposition to the lives of many of the followers of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ who succeeded them and who could not sleep after two in the morning]. The hadith masters [*muḥaddithūn*] disagree as to whether the Blessed Prophet ﷺ missed Fajr once or more than once. This is mentioned in detail in *Aujaz al-Masālik*. My own opinion is that it occurred on three different occasions.

There is an important lesson of Taṣawwuf in this incident. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ was not in the habit of asking who was going to wake him for ṣalāt. It is narrated in *Bukhārī* that the Companions ﷺ requested, "O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, rest for a while." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, "I fear that Fajr will be missed," but Sayyidunā Bilal ﷺ assured him, "I will wake you up."

This incident raises two issues of Taṣawwuf. Firstly, that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ feared he would miss Fajr as Arab custom was to travel in the first part of the night and rest in the last. Why did the Blessed Prophet ﷺ say, "I fear Fajr will be missed?" This proves that the spiritual mentors are sometimes forewarned of events before they transpire or feel when something is amiss. Secondly, that Sayyidunā Bilal ﷺ said, "I will wake you up." In *Aujaz*, it says that this incident was a stern message to Sayyidunā Bilal ﷺ for saying "I will wake you up." When the Blessed Prophet ﷺ felt they would not wake up for Fajr, his fear materialized through Sayyidunā Bilal's ﷺ assurance, "I will wake you up."[21]

But this raises the objection that if the stopover [*lailat al-taʿrīs*] happened several times [i.e. on different journeys], as is the opinion of many scholars, then this statement of Sayyidunā Bilal ﷺ could only have been said at the most on one occasion. The answer to this is that his statement relates to one occasion only. As for the other occasions, the reasons behind the Blessed Prophet ﷺ missing Fajr on them were different.

Likewise, never did an objection enter my heart about the Blessed Prophet ﷺ forgetting in his ṣalāt since he himself said,

إِنِّى لَا أَنْسَى وَلَكِنْ أُنْسَى لِأَسُنَّ

I do not forget but am made to forget in order to show the way.[22]

This essentially means, "I am to teach you the rulings related to when you forget in your ṣalāt and the rulings about the 'prostration of forgetfulness' [*sajdat al-sahw*]." This hadith has been explained in detail in *Aujaz* [1/217] under the chapter, 'What to Do When One is Mistaken in Ṣalāt.'

## SINS AND CONFLICTS OF COMPANIONS ﷺ WAS FOR COMPLETION OF DĪN

Likewise, some Companions ﷺ felt no guilt at the time of committing major sins, whereas, the great spiritual masters [*mashā'ikh*] could not even imagine committing such sins. Though the greatest of spiritual masters cannot reach the level of the lowest ranking of the Companions ﷺ, the narrations which mention the sins of the Companions ﷺ did not incite me to object against them. It was the blessed company of my elders and also the study of aḥādīth that preserved my faith in the Companions ﷺ. I believed that whatever sins the Companions ﷺ committed, were destined for them and that they were destined to commit sins in order to perfect the Dīn of Allah ﷻ. These blessed souls surrendered their whole lives in the path of Allah ﷻ as if to say, "Perfect the pure Shari'a. We are willing to be stoned, have our hands cut off, and throw ourselves in the way of anything to fulfill this noble cause." In my view the aya:

فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ

*Then Allah ﷻ will replace the evils of such people by good deeds*[23]

and the hadith of repentance in which it is narrated that Allah ﷻ will say [on the Day of Judgment], "convert every bad deed into a good deed," is about them.

Abū Dharr ﷺ narrates that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "A man will be brought before Allah ﷻ on the Day of Judgment [this hadith does not refer to a specific individual but to a class of people who will all be dealt with in the same manner. This is confirmed in another hadith where we find the word 'people' [*nās*] used instead of the word 'man' [*rajul*]]. The angels will be ordered to read out to him his small sins without mentioning his major sins. He will be informed that he committed such and such sin on such and such day and this and that sin on such and such day. In this way, he will be forced to admit all his [minor] sins. In his heart, though, he is more worried about his major sins being revealed. Allah ﷻ will then say, 'Change all his sins to good deeds.' At that moment, he will say, 'O my Lord, but I have others sins I do not see here.'"[24]

Sayyidunā Abū Dharr ﷺ says, "I saw the Blessed Prophet ﷺ smiling, the front of his beautiful teeth showing, when he narrated this part of the hadith."[25]

In another hadith, Sayyidunā Abū Huraira ﷺ narrates that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgment, some people will wish they had committed many sins in this world." The Companions ﷺ asked, "Who are these people?" "They are the people whose sins will be converted into good deeds," he replied.[26]

We should remember that the conversion of sins to good deeds on the Day of Judgment is like the example of a president granting clemency to a criminal. Though he has the power to overrule an order of execution [even if the murderer is being led to the death chamber at the time], no one else thinks of committing the same crime and hoping for clemency from the president. However, the Companions ﷺ are an exception to this rule; I have full faith in that all the Companions ﷺ will be granted forgiveness only because the aḥādīth which narrate their excellence and greatness in Dīn prove that they are most deserving of it.

## TWO INCIDENTS OF FORGIVENESS

Once, Sayyidunā Mā'iz ﷺ committed adultery. He came to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and said, "O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, purify me." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Go ask for forgiveness and repent to Allah ﷻ." He walked a short distance, was overwhelmed with guilt, and returned to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and asked again to be purified. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied as before.

In this manner, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ advised him to repent and beg for forgiveness three times. On the fourth time, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ ordered according to the rule of Shariʿa that he be stoned to death. After his execution, two Companions رضي الله عنهما said, "Allah تعالى hid his sins, but he revealed them and died like a dog." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ heard them but remained silent. After a short while they saw the carcass of a donkey; his stomach was bloated and his leg jutted upward. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ called out, "Where is so and so person [calling the two men he had heard previously]?" They said, "We are here." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ pointing towards the carcass said, "Eat from this carcass."

"How can anyone eat from this?" they asked. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ retorted, "Your backbiting of your brother is worse than eating from this carcass. I swear by the One in whose hands is my life, he is swimming in the rivers of Paradise at this moment."[27]

Likewise, once a woman from the Ghāmidī tribe came before the Blessed Prophet ﷺ with the same request. She said, "O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, please purify me." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ told her to return, repent, and beg for forgiveness from Allah تعالى. She said, "O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, you want to turn me back as you did Māʿiz رضي الله عنه, I swear by Allah تعالى I am pregnant by adultery." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ responded, "You cannot be stoned until you deliver the child." When she delivered the child, she returned to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and said, "O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, I have delivered the child, please purify me." He said, "Breastfeed the child until it is weaned." After she weaned the child, she returned holding the child in her hands. The child had a piece of bread in his hands. She said, "The child is now eating bread." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ ordered she be stoned to death. Sayyidunā Khālid رضي الله عنه was amongst the stoners. When some blood spurted on his cheek, a curse came from his mouth. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ chided him saying, "Do not say such things, her repentance is such that if a tax collector made such repentance it would have sufficed him."[28]

In a similar incident, Sayyidunā ʿUmar رضي الله عنه said, "Are we to offer her funeral prayer even though she was an adulterous?" The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, "She has made such repentance that if distributed amongst seventy men of Madina, it would suffice them all. What bigger repentance can there be than that she gave her life?"[29]

## GREATNESS OF THE COMPANIONS

In the books of hadith, one will find these kind of narrations in the chapters of criminal law [*ḥudūd*]. Is anyone amongst us as pious and God-fearing as the noble Companions, who upon the commission of one sin would became restless for retribution? Sayyidunā Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ūd said, "When a believer [*mu'min*] commits a sin he feels as if he is under a mountain and the mountain may fall upon him any minute. When a profligate [*fājir*] commits a sin he makes light of it as if a fly came to rest on his nose; he waves it off with his hand."[30]

Allah is the Knower of the unseen. He is aware of the sins of mankind and of the remorse and guilt that is born from the perpetration of these sins. This is precisely why He was pleased with the Companions despite their sins, mentioning it repeatedly in the Qur'an:

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَانٍ رَّضِيَ
اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتَهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
أَبَدًا ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

> *As for the first and foremost of the Emigrants* [*Muhājirīn*] *and the Helpers* [*Ānṣār*] *and those who follow them in goodness, Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Allah, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, where they will live forever. That is the supreme achievement.*[31]

It says in *Bayān al-Qur'an* [with reference from *al-Durr al-Manthūr*] regarding 'and those who follow them in goodness':

> Ibn Zaid said, "This includes all the Muslims until the Day of Judgment who follow the Blessed Prophet with iḥsān. This is why criticizing the Companions or the spiritual masters is useless because they repented and were forgiven by Allah. Thus, those who continue to criticize and chase after their faults [after reading this aya] are a forsaken people."

In various ayas of the Qur'an, Allah ﷻ mentions the repentance of the Companions ؓ, the promise of their entry into Paradise, etc. Therefore, it is foolhardy to make the mistake of criticizing the Companions ؓ for their sins. But what is even more foolish is when we use their examples to justify our own sins because forgiveness of their sins is assured while ours is not. Thus, those who use the sins of the Companions ؓ to justify their own sins are calling for their own destruction. Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an:

وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَكَرَّهَ
إِلَيْكُمُ الْكُفْرَ وَالْفُسُوقَ وَالْعِصْيَانَ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الرَّاشِدُونَ

*But Allah ﷻ has endeared to you the Faith, and made it beautiful in your hearts, and made detestable to you the disbelief and sins and disobedience. Such people are rightly guided, as a grace from Allah ﷻ, and as a blessing. And Allah ﷻ is All-Knowing, All-Wise.*[32]

In *Bayān al-Qur'an*, *fusūq* [sins] is translated as major sin and *'iṣyān* [disobedience] as minor. This clearly proves that the Companions ؓ were forgiven for their major and minor sins. It also means that holding their sins against them and using their example to justify our own sins is dangerous to our faith.

Durring the campaign of the conquest of Makka, Sayyidunā Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta'a ؓ quietly informed Quraish of the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ plan to attack Makka in a letter [that was later intercepted]. Sayyidunā 'Umar ؓ said to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, "O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, give me permission to behead him." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, "He is amongst the Companions ؓ of the Battle of Badr. What do you know, maybe Allah ﷻ said to the Companions ؓ of Badr, 'You are forgiven, go and do whatever you wish.'"[33]

## BELIEF OF AHL AL-SUNNA ABOUT THE COMPANIONS ﷺ

Shaikh al-Islam Ibn Taimiyya writes in *al-ʿAqīdat al-Wāsiṭiyya*:

> One of the fundamental rules of the Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa [People of the Prophetic Way and the Majority of Scholars] is that their hearts and tongues are pure about the Companions ﷺ.
>
> The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Never criticize my Companions ﷺ. I swear by He in whose hands is my life, any one of you spending gold equal to Mount ʿUḥud in the path of Allah ﷻ, will not equal one *mudd* [1.7 lbs] or even a half a *mudd* of gold they spent in the path of Allah ﷻ." The Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa accepts whatever the Qur'an, Sunna, and consensus say about the Companions ﷺ. Allah ﷻ said to the Companions ﷺ of Badr, "Go do whatever you wish. I have forgiven you." We accept this and believe that all the Companions ﷺ who took the baiʿa of Ḥudaibiya will not enter into the Hellfire [as narrated in the aḥādīth]. Allah ﷻ is pleased with them and they are pleased with Allah ﷻ. Approximately fourteen hundred Companions ﷺ took baiʿa at Ḥudaibiya.
>
> The Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa does not concern itself with the internal conflicts [*mushājarāt*] of the Companions ﷺ. As for the narrations which accuse the Companions ﷺ of wrongdoing, many of them are lies while others are fabrications. As for the mistakes mentioned in authentic narrations, the Companions ﷺ are excusable in this regard. They are either correct or mistaken in their *ijtihād*. Despite this, the Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa does not believe they were infallible [*maʿṣūm*]; as humans they were susceptible to sin.
>
> Though they were susceptible to sin, their excellence in Dīn was such that if they sinned, it would be forgiven, including the sins that are not forgiven for later people. This is because they possessed such virtue that erased their sins and which was not to be observed in the people after them. And even if they committed a sin, they surely repented for it or eliminated it through good deeds. Another reason is that they were the pioneers of Islam [which is sufficient reason to gain forgiveness] or that they have secured the intercession of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ since they were most worthy of it. A third reason is that persecution and poverty and many other such hardships wiped out their sins.

All the above reasons relate to those sins about which it is known that they committed. As for the mistakes in their ijtihād, it is clear that if they were correct, they will earn two rewards, and if they were mistaken, they will still gain one reward while the mistake will be forgiven [as is true for all the mujtahids capable of independent juridical reasoning].[34] Thus, the objections raised against them do not compare to their virtues and accomplishments, their noble attributes, their strong faith in Allah ﷻ and his Blessed Prophet ﷺ, their struggle in the path of Allah ﷻ, their migration, their unflinching support of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, their greatness of knowledge, and their righteous deeds. Those who study the biographies of the Companions رضي الله عنهم with clear insight and knowledge, recognizing the beautiful qualities Allah ﷻ granted them, will know they hold the highest station after the prophets of Allah ﷻ. There will be none like them before or after them. They are the best of the chosen ones from this community.[35]

Shaikh al-Islam Ibn Taimiyya spoke the truth about the Companions رضي الله عنهم. Allah ﷻ praises them repeatedly in the Qur'an and many ayas were revealed that prove the forgiveness of the Companions رضي الله عنهم for all their sins. Allah ﷻ says in the Qur'an:

وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّءُوا الدَّارَ وَالْإِيمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّونَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ
فِي صُدُورِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِمَّا أُوتُوا وَيُؤْثِرُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ
خَصَاصَةٌ وَمَنْ يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

[*and fai'* (*the spoils that are captured without war*) *is for those who established themselves in the homeland* (*of Madina*)] *and in faith before the former ones* [*who emigrated to Madina*], *who have love for those who emigrated to them, and do not feel in their hearts any ambition for what is given to the former ones* [*from fai'*] *and give preference* [*to them*] *over themselves, even though they are in poverty. And those who are saved from the greed of their hearts are the successful.*[36]

In another aya, He says:

فَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُوذُوا فِي سَبِيلِي وَقَاتَلُوا وَقُتِلُوا
لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
ثَوَابًا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ

> *So, those who emigrated, and were expelled from their homes, and were tortured in My way, and fought, and were killed, I shall certainly write off their evil deeds, and shall certainly admit them into gardens beneath which rivers flow, as a reward from Allah ﷻ. It is Allah ﷻ with whom lies the beauty of the reward.*[37]

Many ayas similar to the one above inform about the forgiveness of the Companions رضي الله عنهم for all their sins. In this aya, Allah ﷻ says, "I will surely forgive them for all their sins," but as the Urdu saying goes, '*Mudda'ī sust gawā chust*' (the witness seeks justice while the plaintiff has withdrawn his claim). The foolish ones amongst us still relish finding faults in the Companions رضي الله عنهم, saying, "They were sinful, they were this and that..." and other such statements.

## CRITICIZING THE COMPANIONS رضي الله عنهم

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah ﷻ says, 'I declare war on whoever makes my friend [*walī*] his enemy.'"[38] Moreover, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said:

> "Fear Allah ﷻ, fear Allah ﷻ, regarding my Companions رضي الله عنهم. Do not make them the target of your objections. Whosoever loves my Companions رضي الله عنهم, loves them because he loves me, and whosoever hates them, hates them because he hates me. Whosoever hurts my Companions رضي الله عنهم hurts me, and whosoever hurts me hurts Allah ﷻ, and whosoever hurts Allah ﷻ, the time is near when he will be in the clutch of Allah ﷻ."[39]

Dhahabī says:

> Only those who have read the biographies of the Companions ﷺ will know their lofty status; their progression in Dīn; their struggle against the disbelievers [*kuffār*]; their propagation of the Dīn; their declaration of Islam and raising the banner of Allah ﷻ and his Blessed Prophet ﷺ; and their knowledge of the obligatory acts and the Sunnas of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ within his lifetime and after his demise. If they had not lived, the fundamental and ancillary sciences would not have reached us. Without the Companions ﷺ we would be ignorant of the obligatory acts and the Sunnas, and we would have no knowledge of the aḥādīth of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and the details of his life. Therefore, whosoever denigrates their status leaves the folds of Islam and is deviated from the path of the Muslims. When one denigrates them, it is because of the hatred he harbors in his heart and the grudge that is created by his condemnation of the Companions ﷺ. This denigration is a sign that he rejects the ayas which extoll their high status. It is also a sign that he rejects the love the Blessed Prophet ﷺ had for the Companions ﷺ and the the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ praise and mention of their lofty status in the aḥādīth. Another reason a denigrator leaves the folds of Islam is because the Companions ﷺ are the most reliable and respected narrators of the narrations of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. Denigration of the narrator is necessarily denigration of the one being narrated from. These words can only be of benefit for the one who thinks, tries to understand, and whose belief is not darkened by hypocrisy and heresy. Everything the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said in praise of the Companions in the aḥādīth should suffice for anyone. For example, Anas ﷺ narrates that some Companions ﷺ complained to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, "People speak ill about us," to which the Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, "The curse of Allah ﷻ, his angels, and all of mankind is upon he who speaks ill about my Companions ﷺ."[40] In another place, Anas ﷺ narrates that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah ﷻ chose me and chose the Companions ﷺ for me, and made them friends, brothers, and relations to me. In the future, a people will come who will criticize and denigrate them. Do not eat or drink with them, do not marry them, do not pray with them, and do not pray the funeral prayer upon them."[41]

Dhahabī narrates many other similar narrations in his book *Kitāb al-Kabā'ir* and quotes many scholars as saying that those who blaspheme the Companions ﷺ, find fault in them, publicize their sins, or attribute any ignoble act or statement towards them is a hypocrite.

This brief book cannot cover all of which has been said about those who criticize or publicize the mistakes and sins of the Companions ﷺ.

The narrations about the gardens of *Fadak*[42] never made me resent the Companions ﷺ. I heard many objections, but always thought: "How could the daughter of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ – who spent her life grinding grain in a grinding mill and bruised her body carrying waterskins – become a slave of the material world and boycott the caliph Sayyidunā Abū Bakr ﷺ for a petty thing of this material world?" My heart was always pure about this issue and other such contentious issues that arose amongst the Companions ﷺ; in my view it was simply a manifestation of the strength of their faith.

How could an evil trait like greed take control of Sayyida Fāṭima ﷺ, Sayyidunā 'Alī ﷺ, and Sayyidunā 'Abbās ﷺ especially when their servants and servants' servants were far from such ignoble traits? All the wars that took place between the Companions ﷺ demonstrated the strength of their Dīn, knowledge, and belief. Regarding the *Fadak* issue, the disagreement between Sayyida Fāṭima ﷺ and Sayyidunā Abū Bakr Siddique ﷺ was juridical which led the Companions ﷺ to disagree as to whether there is inheritance in the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ wealth or not. Sayyidunā 'Umar ﷺ and Sayyidunā Abū Bakr ﷺ believed the hadith, "We do not leave inheritance" was a general rule that applied to all Muslims whereas Sayyidunā 'Alī ﷺ, Sayyida Fāṭima ﷺ, and Sayyidunā 'Abbās ﷺ, believed it addressed a specific group of people. The matter of *Fadak* was a typical example of disagreement in interpretation of the hadith and knowledge of the Shari'a. Sayyida Fāṭima's ﷺ refusal to speak to Sayyidunā Abū Bakr ﷺ regarding the issue of the gardens of *Fadak* means that she never spoke to him again about these tracts of land. Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar al-Asqalānī mentions this point in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* and narrates many aḥādīth in support of this view. This is also the opinion of many respected commentators of hadith books. The opinion of this person [i.e. the author] is that it was not love of wealth, but adherence to the Shari'a which brought Fāṭima ﷺ to Sayyidunā Abū Bakr Siddīque ﷺ, because she believed she had a legal right over that wealth. This is why she was angry and stopped talking to him. In my opinion, this was her firmness in Dīn; it also explains why Sayyidunā 'Alī ﷺ and Sayyidunā Abbās ﷺ both appealed their case in Sayyidunā 'Umar's ﷺ caliphate. They

hoped that he might decide in their favor though Sayyidunā ʿUmar رضي الله عنه agreed with Sayyidunā Abū Bakr Siddīque رضي الله عنه in this matter and upheld his decision.

Many essential aspects of the Dīn of Allah ﷻ were being demonstrated practically in the period of the first three caliphs. Once these issues came to a close and the period of the first three caliphs ended, the community needed to be instructed on another issue which was demonstrated in the time of the last caliph, Sayyidunā ʿAlī رضي الله عنه. This was the issue of ʿopposition to the caliph.' To complete the Dīn, all these issues had to be fully demonstrated within the period of the rightly-guided caliphs [*al-khulafa al-rāshidūn*]. This is why it never occurred to me that maybe tribalism or love for wealth played some part in the internal conflicts of the Companions رضي الله عنهم. If anything, it only proved the greatness and strength of their īmān. They were firm on whatever they believed to be the truth and fought to defend it when forced to. This is why I always looked upon a person who interpreted the actions and statements of the Companions رضي الله عنهم as human weakness with indifference, as would anyone who has studied the books of hadith in some depth.

## INTERNAL CONFLICTS OF THE COMPANIONS رضي الله عنهم

I wrote extensively on the internal conflicts of the Companions رضي الله عنهم in my book, *al-ʿItidāl*. The Battle of Jamal was a fierce war that took place between Sayyidunā ʿAlī رضي الله عنه and the Mother of the Believers, ʿĀʾisha رضي الله عنها. Over twenty-thousand men died in this battle. Before the war began and the two armies pitched into battle, Sayyidunā ʿAlī رضي الله عنه walked to the frontlines and called out for Sayyidunā Zubair رضي الله عنه. When Sayyidunā Zubair رضي الله عنه stepped forward they both hugged and cried. Sayyidunā ʿAlī رضي الله عنه asked, "What forces you to come here and oppose me?" Sayyidunā Zubair رضي الله عنه answered, "The blood of Sayyidunā ʿUthmān رضي الله عنه." They both continued their discussion for a short time.

This is the conduct of the commanders of two armies who were ready to fight and kill each other. After this, they fought and Sayyidunā ʿAlī رضي الله عنه was victorius capturing many prisoners. Many of Sayyidunā ʿAlī's رضي الله عنه companions insisted these prisoners be put to death, but Sayyidunā ʿAlī رضي الله عنه refused and took baiʿa from them and forgave them. He allowed their wealth to be taken as spoils of war, but refused to enslave them [as was the custom of victorious armies]. Many soldiers objected: "If you are going to

make their wealth spoils of war, then you should also enslave them." At first Sayyidunā 'Alī ﵁ remained quiet, but when they insisted, he said, "Tell me, who amongst you is willing to take your mother, Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﵂, as your slave?" They replied, "Never! We ask for Allah ﷻ's forgiveness! We can't do that." Sayyidunā 'Alī ﵁ said, "And I also ask Allah ﷻ for His forgiveness."

Do we ever keep the respect of the one who opposes us? Do we even respect those who oppose us in our personal issues as the Companions ﵃ respected those who opposed them in times of war?

At the very end of this battle, Sayyida 'Āisha's ﵂ camel fell. Sayyidunā 'Alī ﵁ immediately announced, "Watch out and make sure the Mother of the Believers is not hurt!" After this, Sayyidunā 'Alī ﵁ reached the camel of the Mother of the Believers and said, "O mother, are you injured or hurt? May Allah ﷻ forgive you for your mistake." Sayyida 'Ā'isha ﵂ replied, "May Allah ﷻ forgive you as well."

This was the conduct of the Companions ﵃ toward their opponents and their respect for them. What would we do if our rivals came in our hands? Would we spare them their lives, their wealth, or their honor?

The Battle of Ṣiffīn was the famous battle between Sayyidunā 'Alī ﵁ and Sayyidunā Mu'āwiya ﵁. Many historians narrate that the two armies fought throughout the day but once darkness fell the soldiers of one army walked out to the other, and participated in their funeral prayer and the burial of their dead.[43] And if one party was confused on some rulings of the Shari'a, they sent some of their men to learn the rulings from the other side.[44]

The emperor of the Byzantine Empire tried to exploit this division within the Muslims. When Sayyidunā Mu'āwiya ﵁ found out, he sent a letter to the Byzantian emperor, "If you have made the decision to attack, then I swear by Allah ﷻ I will make peace with 'Alī ﵁, and I will be in the front lines of the army that Sayyidunā 'Alī ﵁ dispatches against you. We will destroy the city of Constantinople and uproot your government like carrots and turnips."[45]

The story behind this is that the Byzantine Emperor wrote a letter to Sayyidunā Mu'āwiya ﵁ saying, "'Alī ﵁ is a thorn in your side, I will dispatch an army to aid you." In reply, Sayyidunā Mu'āwiya ﵁ said, "O Christian dog! You want to take advantage of our difference of opinion. Remember, if you squint your eyes in the direction of 'Alī ﵁, Mu'āwiya ﵁ will come as a soldier of 'Alī's ﵁ army to gouge out your eyes." Likewise, it is narrated that Sayyidunā Mu'āwiya ﵁ said, "I swear by Allah ﷻ, 'Alī ﵁ is better and greater than me, and I only oppose him because of the blood of Uthmān ﵁. If he avenges the blood of 'Uthmān ﵁ I will be the

first of the people of Shām (Greater Syria) to take bai'a on his hands."[46] Once, during the rule of Sayyidunā Mu'āwiya ﷺ, a man named Ibn Khaibarī caught his wife with another man. Unable to control himself, he killed the adulterer. When the case came to Sayyidunā Mu'āwiya ﷺ, he did not know how to decide it. Due to the circumstances of the crime, he was hesitant about executing the murderer. Sayyidunā Mu'āwiya ﷺ wrote to Sayyidunā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'ari ﷺ to ask the correct ruling on this issue from Sayyidunā 'Alī ﷺ.[47]

Could we ever admit our ignorance in front of our rivals? Would we be able to inquire from them about something we did not know? The truth is that we would not trust our rivals in any situation.[48]

Many incidents of this kind occurred between Sayyidunā 'Alī ﷺ and Sayyidunā Mu'āwiya ﷺ which have been compiled by Shaikh Yūsuf[49] in his book *Ḥayāt al-Ṣahāba*. Once, Ḍarār ibn Ḍamura Kinānī [a staunch supporter of Sayyidunā 'Alī ﷺ] came to Sayyidunā Mu'āwiya ﷺ after Sayyidunā 'Alī's ﷺ death. Sayyidunā Mu'āwiya ﷺ said, "Describe 'Alī ﷺ for me." He asked, "O Leader of the Believers, will you excuse me from this?" "I will not, you must describe him to me," replied Sayyidunā Mu'āwiya ﷺ. Then Ḍarār spoke:

> If I must tell you then listen! Sayyidunā 'Alī ﷺ, I swear by Allah ﷻ, was an exalted person and very strong. He was straightforward in whatever he said and ruled with justice. Knowledge streamed from his every angle, and intelligence poured forth from every part. The material world and its beauty and ornamentation disquieted him. I swear by Allah ﷻ, he cried copiously and pondered a lot. He would flip his palms while addressing himself. He liked simple cloth and preferred coarse food. I swear by Allah ﷻ, he lived amongst us as if he was one of us. When we visited him, he would sit us near him and whatever we asked, he would answer. Despite his simplicity and mingling with us, we did not have the courage to speak to him because of our reverence and awe of him. And when he laughed, his teeth were like stringed pearls. He respected the pious and loved the poor. Never did a strong and rich man hope to win in his wrongdoing nor was a poor and weak man unhopeful of his fairness and his ability to mete out justice to him. I am Allah ﷻ's witness that I saw him in the darkness of the night, in the niche [*miḥrāb*], clutching his beard, shaking as if he was bitten by a poisonous animal. He was crying like a mourning person and his voice echoes in my mind

> to this day when he said and kept on repeating, 'O my Lord, O my Lord' and humbled himself before Allah ﷻ. Then he addressed the material world saying, 'You want to deceive me and you beautify yourself for me only. Get out of here, go and deceive someone else. Your sittings are wretched and your hardships are easy. O my, O my! The preparation for the Hereafter is little, the journey is long, and the path is dangerous.'

By the time Ḍarār finished, Sayyidunā Muʿāwiya ؓ was weeping. His beard was soaked with tears and he repeatedly wiped them with his cuffs. Other people in the gathering wept and sobbed. Sayyidunā Muʿāwiya ؓ finally said, "You spoke the truth, Abū al-Ḥasan was as you described him, may Allah ﷻ forgive him." Then he asked, "Ḍarār! How much do you mourn the death of ʿAlī ؓ?" Ḍarār replied, "Like a mother whose only child is slaughtered in her lap. Her crying cannot stop and her grief can never diminish." After this, Ḍarār returned.

Iḥsān is one of the foundations of the Dīn and therefore the Dīn can never be complete without it. This is why the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "I am the source of wisdom and ʿAlī ؓ is its door,"[50] meaning that Sayyidunā ʿAlī ؓ is the portal for all the different paths [lines of Taṣawwuf] of Taṣawwuf, Sulūk and wisdom. Therefore, those who say Taṣawwuf is taken from Hindu pundits and sadhus are truly ignorant of Dīn. Taṣawwuf began in the time of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, and its continuation in a specific form reaches us through Sayyidunā ʿAlī ؓ [as will be mentioned later]. This is a lengthy topic, but my health will not allow me to explain it to the fullest.

## SHORTCOMINGS IN OUR UNDERSTANDING

One should not deduce from all that has been said that an objection never arose in my mind about a hadith. I had objections, but whenever I could not find an answer I blamed it on my own lack of knowledge. When my daughter was small and reading the *Qāʿida Baghdādiyya* [primary booklet for learning Arabic] she would connect the letters and say, "*Alif madda-Ā, nūn fatḥ-nā: Āna*. *Bā alif fatḥ-bā nūn fatḥ-nā: Bāna*," and likewise she went on *tāna*, *thāna*, etc. Her mother then taught her: *hamza madda-Ā*, *nūn fatḥ-nā: Āna*. My daughter jumped up and said, "How could this be *āna* mother, it should be *hamzāna*." Her mother

quickly turned the matter over to me saying, "When your father comes, ask him." And when I was tired of explaining to her, I said, "You do not understand at this time, when you get older everything will be clear to you."

Likewise, when I had an objection regarding a hadith, I remembered my answer to my daughter, "You do not understand at this time."

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## ENDNOTES

1 Deoband is located three hours west of the capital of India, New Delhi.

2 The first date is Hijri and the second Gregorian.

3 Many of the descendants of 'Umar ﷺ, Abū Bakr ﷺ, 'Uthmān ﷺ, and 'Alī ﷺ settled down in the *Du Āba* area. Many of the elders of Deoband are descendants of these noble families.

4 Qutb al-Dīn Aḥmad Walī Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm Dehlawī (1702-3/1762) revived the science of aḥādīth in the Indian Subcontinent at a time when philosophy and logic were considered the acme of knowledge. Most Ahl al-Ḥadīth, Deobandī, and many Barelwī schools trace their chain of transmission [*sanad*] back to him.

He was a master in the Islamic sciences and wrote on many of them including the principles of exegesis [*uṣul al-tafsīr*], the principles of hadith [*uṣul al-ḥadīth*], Arabic literature [*al-adab al-'arabī*], biographies of the narrators of hadith [*asmā' al-rijāl*], the principles of Dīn [*uṣul al-Dīn*], differences of the scholars [*al-khilāf*], the underlying meanings [*'ilm al-asrār*], political science [*al-siyāsat al-shar'iyya*] etc.

He was a revivalist [*mujaddid*] but many, noting his depth of thought and knowledge, claim he was a *mujtahid* also. His book on Taṣawwuf, *al-Qaul al-Jamīl*, and on ijtihād and taqlīd, *al-'Iqd al-Jīd* are quoted extensively by Shaikh Zakariyyā in this book. [*Saviours of the Islamic Spirit*, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī]

5 Imdād Allāh (1817-1899) was from the family of ʿUmar ibn Khaṭṭāb ﵁. He was the spiritual father of some of the greatest scholars whose names will appear repeatedly in *Shari'a and Ṭarīqa*. His spiritual family continues to thrive to this day through the traditional Deobandī schools scattered throughout the world and his successors [*khulafā*] who have worked in every field of Dīn from politics to commentaries of hadith books and from traditional schools to the propagation of Islam. His greatest contribution to Islam were his successors who dedicated their lives to Islam. The most well-known are Shaikh Qāsim Nānautwī, Shaikh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī, Shaikh Ḥaider Ḥasan Khān, Shaikh Yaʿqūb Nānautwī, Shaikh Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan and Shaikh Ashraf ʿAlī Thānwī. Their greatest accomplishment was their moderation in Shari'a and Taṣawwuf and in giving each its rightful status in Islam. They were strict adherents of the Sunnas and eliminators of innovations. They used Taṣawwuf to perfect their adherence to and propagation of the Shari'a and avoided the type of excessiveness [*ghuluww*] in Taṣawwuf that gave rise to innovations. One cannot understand the depth of al-Ḥāj Imdād Allah's spirituality until one understands the achievements of his successors. [See *Ma'ārif al-Akābir*, Ashraf ʿAlī Thānwī]

6 Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī (1828/1905) was a descendant of Abū Ayyūb Anṣārī ﵁. From childhood, he was a lover of the Sunnas, extremely pure-hearted and blessed with the certainty of faith [*yaqīn*] that comes after years of spiritual exertions [*mujāhadāt*]. He says, "If the children were playing and it was time for Jumuʿa, I would walk away from the game and say to the others, 'I heard my uncle say: Whoever misses Jumuʿa more than three times is a hypocrite.'" He had great acumen and was extremely bright. As classmates, he and Shaikh Qāsim [see below] read off the classical texts of *al-Shams al-Bāzigha, Mīr Zāhid,* and *Qāḍī* like a memorizer of Qur'an reciting the Qur'an. If he and Shaikh Qāsim ever disagreed and debated on any scholarly issue, the whole school [both students and teachers] would gather to be entertained by their incredible argumentations. Shaikh Mamlūk Alī would say, "Rashīd Aḥmad's argument is stronger but Qāsim escapes defeat because of his intellect."

He made bai'a with al-Ḥāj Imdād Allāh and gained successorship [*khilāfa*] after seven days.

As a leading member of the rebellion against the British, he was arrested and imprisoned after the mutiny of 1857. Though he was later freed, he was placed under house arrest for a long time after. He also received a death warrant but was saved by the will of Allah.

His lessons on the six famous aḥādīth books attracted students from all over the country. Though Shaikh Gangohī is not officially recognized as the founding father of Deoband, he was most certainly the think tank which lent the school its distinctive outlook, uncompromising adherence to the Shari'a and moderation in Taṣawwuf.

Below are three anecdotes of his taqwā:

When a surgeon explained that he would not feel any discomfort from surgery [he had cataracts in both eyes] except that he would have to avoid prostration in a few ṣalāt, he replied, "I can't imagine missing prostration of even one ṣalāt."

He once asked his spiritual student, Shaikh Yaḥyā Kāndhelwī [father of Shaikh Zakariyyā], "Yaḥyā, has so-and-so forgotten us [this person was vindictive of Shaikh

Gangohī and frequently published articles against the Shaikh]?" Shaikh Yaḥyā replied, "Ḥaḍrat, he uses profane language against you and I cannot bear to bring such hate-filled words to my lips." He replied, "No, read to me whatever he writes [about me], if he has indeed found a fault, I will rectify it."

After one of the conventions in Deoband, the Shaikh was thronged by people and could not make it in time for the opening *takbīr*. After ṣalāt, he was extremely sad and distressed. Someone asked, "Is everything okay, Shaikh?" He replied, "I missed the opening *takbīr* of ṣalāt after twenty-seven years."

His four main successors were Shaikh Abd al-Raḥīm Raipurī, Shaikh Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī, Shaikh Ṣiddīq Aḥmad Ambhetwī, and Shaikh al-Hind, Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan [who also gained successorship from al-Ḥāj Imdād Allāh]. [See *Tadhkirat al-Rashīd*, 'Āshiq Ilāhī Mīratī]

7 Qāsim Nānautwī (1832/1880) was a descendant of Abū Bakr ؓ and was born in Nānauta, a village in [*Du Āba*] U.P, India. He gained his basic education and memorized Qur'an in Nānauta, traveled to Delhi to study the Islamic sciences under Shaikh Mamlūk Alī, and finally completed his study of hadith under the known hadith scholar, Shāh 'Abd al-Ghanī. He founded the well-known traditional Islamic school of Deoband with the purpose of rekindling the Islamic spirit which the British sought to destroy through their education system. As a visionary, his sole objective through Deoband and other such schools was to protect Muslims and Islam against western influence. He was a successor [*khalīfa*] of al-Ḥāj Imdād Allāh and was thus one of the first fruits in the family tree of al-Ḥāj Imdād Allāh. His propensity for the science of Islamic doctrine [*'ilm al-kalām*] and debate led him to write great philosophical works like *Taḥdhīr al-Nās* and *Ajwiba Arba'īn.* He narrowly escaped arrest and execution by the British after the mutiny of 1857. It is known that he hid for three days from the British and suddenly appeared on the fourth day. People begged him to hide but he remarked, "I only wished to fulfill the Sunna of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ [the Blessed Prophet ﷺ hid in the cave of Thaur for three days]." [See *Sawāniḥ Qāsmī*, Manāẓir Aḥsan Gilānī]

8 Muḥammad Ismā'īl Jhanjhāhnwī (-1898) was from the family of Abū Bakr ؓ and was Sheikh Zakariyyā's paternal grandfather. He descended from one of the noblest families in the *Du Āba* area, known for its taqwā, struggles in the path of Allah, and a myriad of brilliant scholars who spread the knowledge of Dīn, uprooted the innovations, and devoted their lives to the cause of Islam. He was amongst those whose every supplication is accepted [*mustajāb al-da'wāt*]. Shaikh Zakariyyā narrated one of his incidents in chapter eight. He had three sons: the eldest, Shaikh Muḥammad, then Shaikh Yaḥyā [father of Shaikh Zakariyyā], and his youngest son Shaikh Ilyās, founder of the Tablighī Jamā'a. [See *Sīrat Shaikh al-Ḥadīth Maulānā Muḥammad Zakariyyā*, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī]

9 Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī (1852/1927) was a descendant of Abū Ayyūb Anṣārī ؓ. He was a successor of Shaikh Gangohī and also the spiritual mentor of Shaikh Zakariyyā. He is the author of *Badhl al-Majhūd*, the eighteen-volume commentary of *Abū Dāwūd*. He made three supplications to Allah:

- ✧ To complete *Badhl al-Majhūd* before his death

- ✧ To see a time of peace in Ḥijāz [Makka and Madina] and a time when it is governed by the Shari‘a [as occurred in the beginning of the Sa‘ūd goverment]
- ✧ To be buried by to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ

By the grace of Allah, all his supplications were accepted.

Two of his greatest successors were Shaikh Zakariyyā, his father Shaikh Yaḥyā and Shaikh Ilyās Dehlawī. [See *Tadhkirat al-Khalīl*, Sayyid Muḥammud Thānī]

10 Mahmūd al-Ḥasan Deobandī (1851-1920) was the first student and teacher of Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband. After completion of his studies, he spent much of his time serving Sheikh Qasim Nānautwī. On the advice of Sheikh Qasim Nānautwī, al-Hāj Imdād Allāh accepted Shaikh al-Hind in his bai'a, and then granted him successorship immediately after. In Deoband, he taught *Tirmidhī*, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ,* and *Hidāya*.

Shaikh al-Hind became known primarily for his struggle to liberate the Indian subcontinent from the British. He was eventually caught and arrested in Ḥijāz, betrayed by the Hashimite governor of Makka and sent to Malta [where the British confined high-profile prisoners]. He was freed after three years and two months of confinement in Malta and died two years later in 1920. Moments before he passed away he pronounced the name of Allah loudly seven times, then turned toward his right in fulfillment of the Sunna and breathed his last. *Raḥima Allāh Raḥmatan Wāsi‘a.* [See Ḥayāt Shaikh al-Hind, Sayyid Aṣghar Ḥussain]

11 Shāh Abd al-Raḥīm Raipurī (1853/1919) was one of the highest-ranking successors of Shaikh Gangohī. He studied the Islamic sciences in Maẓāhir al-‘Ulūm Sahāranpūr under some of the greatest scholars of his time [e.g., Shaikh Aḥmad Ḥasan Kānpurī [successor of Al-Ḥāj Imdād Allāh] and Shaikh Aḥmad ‘Alī Saharānpūrī, student of the greatest hadith master, Shāh Isḥāq Dehlawī].

He was a master in Taṣawwuf and loved recitation of Qur'an. He established centers for learning recitation of Qur'an [for children and adults] throughout his region and spent his night and days reciting Qur'an in the blessed month of Ramadan. Due to his devotion to Qur'an in Ramadan, visitors [thousands flocked to his sanctum in the month of Ramadan] were not allowed to meet him in the holy month.

He was known for his clairvoyances. Shaikh Thānwī would say, "I have no problem sitting with Shaikh al-Hind, Mahmūd al-Ḥasan and Shaikh Khalīl Aḥmad, but I can't sit in the gatherings of Shāh ‘Abd Raḥīm; who knows what is disclosed to him."

Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir [see foonote fourteen] was his main successor.

12 Ashraf ‘Alī Thānwī (1863/1943) was a descendant of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ. His mentor, al-Ḥāj Imdād Allāh, would say, "Ashraf ‘Alī is my tongue; he articulates whatever descends in my heart." His disciplinary style of training seekers in adherence to the Shari‘a and mentoring them in the path of Taṣawwuf earned him the title 'Ḥakīm al-Umma' [Reformer of the *Umma*]. *Tarbiyat al-Sālik* was a brilliant collection of his inspired treatments to the conditions of his spiritual students. This book demonstrated his uncanny ability to solve the spiritual problems of the seekers and prescribe treatments accordingly. Once, Sheikh Sahāranpūrī asked, "Whenever I go to Bahāwalpūr, the nawabs present me with monetary gifts. I don't know if I can

accept them as I feel a preinclination [*ishrāf*] toward it." Shaikh Thānwī replied, "In a theoretical situation, if they had not presented you with anything and you became upset by it, then it is a sign of preinclination [*ishrāf*], otherwise it is a whisper from Satan [*waswasa*]."

Sheikh Thānwī's greatest contribution was reformation of the true Taṣawwuf as inherited from the pious predecessors. Through his lectures [over sixty volumes] and writings, he systematically cleared away misunderstandings about Taṣawwuf, uprooted the innovations, and clarified the essence and objectives of Taṣawwuf.

Over one thousand works are attributed to Sheikh Thānwī. Under his auspices, his nephew authored the monumental eighteen-volume work on Ḥanafī Fiqh, *'Ilā al-Sunan.* Other famous books authored under his name include: *Bahishtī Zewar* [Heavenly Ornaments], on fiqh; *Bayān al-Qur'an,* an exegesis of the Qur'an; and *Bawādir al-Nawādir,* a treatise covering juridical and contemporary issues. Shaikh Zakariyyā has drawn extensively from two of his books, *al-Tasharruf* and *al-Takashshuf,* in the chapters on Taṣawwuf. [See *Ashraf al-Sawāniḥ*, Khawāja 'Azīz al-Ḥasan and also Ḥakīm al-Umma, 'Abdal-Mājid Daryābādī]

13 Faḍl al-Raḥmān Ganj Murādabādī (1793-1885) studied hadith under the two greatest hadith masters of his time, Shāh Isḥāq Dehlawī and Shā 'Abd al-'Azīz Dehlawī. His passionate love ['*ishq*] for Allah and his Blessed Prophet ﷺ was felt by people who sat in his company. It is said that after meeting him once, people became enamored of him and could not take their eyes off of him. Due to his passionate love, he frequently came under the spells of his spiritual conditions. Once, someone recited the aya, 'And he [Ismā'īl ﷺ] was favorite to his Lord' [19:55]. He swooned and remained sick for two months after. Once he recited the aya*,* '*Qul in Kuntum Tuḥibbūna Allāh*' and ordered, "Translate this aya." But before anyone could speak, he himself translated, "Walk our [the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ] walk, then Allah will start loving you." Sombody once asked him, "How did you reach such a lofty position?" He replied, "From strict adherence to the way of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ." He was known for his clairvoyances, moving poetry, and profound sayings.

People came from afar to sit in his hadith sessions and take permission to transmit aḥādīth from his blessed chain. [See *Tadhkira Haḥrat Maulana Faḍl al-Raḥmān Ganj Murādabādī*, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī]

14 Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz Dehlawī (1746-1824) was the eldest son of Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī. All the chains of hadith from narrators in the Indian subcontinent ascend through him to his father, Shāh Walī Allāh. He was talented in every field. He was a jurist, hadith master, and exegesist and was also outstanding in verse and prose and was a talented archer, horseman, and calligrapher. In Taṣawwuf, he was a successor of his father and combined all the beautiful qualities of fortitude, kindness, humility, and love, etc. in his character. The Shiites made two attempts to poison and kill him after he wrote, *Tuḥfa Ithnā' 'Ashariyya,* a comprehensive treatise on Shi'ism. It is said that his funeral prayer was prayed fifty-five times.

15 A compilation of the sayings and anecdotes of the elders of Deoband, annotated by Shaikh Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī.

16 A hadith textbook compiled by Shaikh Walī al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb al-'Umrī al-Tabrezī [circa 1340], taught in most traditional Islamic schools.

17 Sayyid Ḥussain Aḥmad Madanī (1879-1957) was a descendant of Ḥussain ﷺ. He studied the Islamic sciences from both Shaikh al-Hind, Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan and Shaikh Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī in Deoband but was unable to complete his studies as his father decided to migrate to Madina. After completing his studies in Madina, he began to teach in the Sacred Precinct [*al-Ḥaram*] and quickly became famous as the Shaikh of the Prophetic Precinct. Though, he made bai'a with Shaikh Gangohī, Shaikh Gangohī advised him [since he was migrating] to take his dhikr from al-Ḥāj Imdād Allāh. After some time, he received a letter from Shaikh Gangohī to come to Gangoh. A few months later he received successorship from Shaikh Gangohī. He later settled down in the subcontinent [though his family had emigrated to Madina] and explained why. He said, "There is more work of Dīn to be done in the subcontinent than in Ḥijāz [Makka and Madina]."

He inherited the spirit of political struggle against the British from his teacher, Shaikh al-Hind, and spent a greater part of his life in politics. As a result, his life became an extraordinary example of determination, forbearance, and sacrifice. He spent as much time in jail as he did at home. In Ramadan, thousands of people came to stay in his company in retreat [*i'tikāf*]. Most of his life was spent against the British in jail or in conventions and in teaching hadith. Despite his busy life, he still found time to teach *Bukhārī* and other hadith books in Deoband. [See Sawāniḥ Shaikh al-Islām, Najm al-Dīn Iṣlāḥī]

18 Shāh 'Abd al-Qādir Raipūrī (1878-1962) studied the Islamic sciences from the student of Shaikh Gangohī, Shaikh Muḥammad Rafīq. One who reads his biography [see Haḍrat Maulāna'Abd al-Qādir Raipūrī], is reminded of Imam Ghazālī's spiritual odyssey and the yearning that made him restless for spiritual peace. It was Imam Ghazālī's book *al-Munqadh min al-Ḍalāl* that led him in search for a shaikh. He finally came to the sanctum of Shaikh 'Abd al-Rāhīm Raipūrī and served him for fourteen years until his shaikh passed away. His spiritual exertions were reminiscent of the Sufis of the past. In the winter season, when it was biting cold and he could not afford a blanket, he would spend the whole night warming himself by chanting the dhikr of Allah ﷻ loudly.

He had a magnetic personality and was known for two amazing qualities: his broad-mindedness and his openheartedness. People came to him from every end: scholars, professionals, intellectuals, laymen, military, the rich and the poor, and the weak and the powerful. Two of his greatest successors were Shaikh Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī and Shaikh Manẓūr Nau'mānī [author of Iranian Revolution and founder of *al-Furqān* Magazine]. [ See *Haḍrat Maulānā 'Abd al-Qādir Raipūrī*, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī]

19 Ilyās Dehlawī (1886-1944) was Sheikh Zakariyyā's paternal uncle. As a child, Shaikh Ilyās spent much of his time studying the Islamic sciences in Gangoh under the supervision of his older brother Shaikh Yaḥyā and in the spiritual company of Shaikh Gangohī with whom he had taken bai'a. When Shaikh Yaḥyā passed away the next year, he moved to Niẓām al-Dīn, a small village on the outskirts of New Delhi [India]. When the unlettered people of Mewāt passed through to find jobs in the city, he promised to pay them under the condition that they spent the day with him. He then taught them the basics of Dīn and spent whatever he had on them to the point where he and his family many times spent their nights in hunger.

When Shaikh Gangohī passed away he made bai'a with Shaikh Sahāranpūrī from whom he also gained successorship. He prayed voluntary prayers [*nawāfil*] between Maghrib and 'Ishā' from childhood and never missed the Chishtiyya dhikr of the 'twelve *tasbīḥ'* [see chapter thirteen] throughout his life. He said, "How can I ever quit 'twelve *tasbīḥ'* when I achieved *iḥsān* through its blessings." Shaikh al-Hind, Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan said of him, "Shaikh Ilyās reminds me of the Companions ﷺ of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ."

Once, he decided to settle down in Madina. When he went to visit the grave of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, he was told to return to India and that Allah wished to take some work of Dīn from him. He spent many days anxious, thinking about how he would do the work of Dīn. He thought to himself, 'I cannot talk [he had a stutter], I am not a writer, and am weak and often remain sick.' Finally, Shaikh Saʿīd Aḥmad [older brother of Shaikh Ḥussain Aḥmad Madanī] advised him, "You weren't told to go start the work of Dīn but that the work of Dīn will be taken from you. Why do you worry, the One who has promised will take it Himself." This was the beginning of the *tablīgh* work. The work of *tablīgh*, as we see it today, is the fruit of his sincerity, sacrifice, and struggles. [See Sawāniḥ *Muḥammud Yūsuf*, Sayyid Muḥammud Thānī]

20 Bukhārī, Su'āl Jibra'īl al-Nabiyy

21 Bukhārī, al-Adhān Baʿd Dhahāb al-Waqt

22 Muwaṭṭa', al-ʿAmal fi al-Sahw

23 25:70

24 Muslim, Adnā Ahl al-Jannat Manzilatan

25 Shamā'il, Mā Jā' fī Ḍiḥk

26 Tafsīr al-Ālūsī, 14/145 | Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Surat al-Furqān* 10/369

27 Abu Dāwūd, Rajm Māʿidh ibn Mālik

28 Muslim, Man Iʿtarafa ʿalā Nafsihī bi al-Zinā

29 Ibid

30 Miskhāt al-Maṣābīḥ, al-Istighfār wa al-Tauba

31 9:100

32 49:7

33 Bukhārī, *al-Jāsūs*

34 Bukhārī, Ajr al-Ḥākim idhā Ijtahada

35 al-ʿAqīdat al-Wāsiṭiyya, p. 142

36 59:8-9

37 3:195

38 Bukhārī, *al-Tawāḍuʿ*

39 Tirmidhī, fī Man Sabba Aṣḥāb al-Nabiyy

40 al-Mu'jim al-Ausaṭ, *Man Ismuhū Aḥmad*

41 Kanz al-'Ummāl, al-Bāb al-Thālith fī Dhikr al-Ṣaḥāba wa Faḍlihim

42 *Fadak*—A plot of land the Blessed Prophet ﷺ owned in Khaibar which Sayyida Fāṭima ؓ laid claim to in the caliphate of Sayyiduna Abū Bakr Siddique ؓ.

43 al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya 7/227

44 Tārīkh al-Khulafā'

45 Tāj al-'Urūs 7/208

46 al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya 7/129

47 Muwaṭṭa', al-Qaḍā' fī Man Wajada ma'a Imra'tihī Rajulan

48 al-I'tidāl, p. 230

49 Yūsuf Kāndhelwī (1917-1965) was the son of Shaikh Ilyās Kandhelwī, founder of the Tablighī Jamā'a. He continued where his father left off and through him, the work of tablīgh became a global presence.

He headed the movement for twenty-one years. He spoke for two hours every day after Fajr from the day he became head of the movement to the day he died. Then, throughout the day, he held sessions for the workers, dispatched groups across the country, and managed the affairs of a worldwide movement which had become, by the grace of Allah, one of the most effective tools for the propagation and preservation of Islam since the last few centuries.

His book, *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥāba* [three volumes], is originally in Arabic and has been translated into English and Urdu and is widely read throughout the Muslim world. [See *Sawāniḥ Muḥammud Yūsuf*, Sayyid Muḥammud Thānī]

50 Tirmidhī, Manāqib 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib

الأول

Chapter One

# The Holy Qur'an

## FULFILLING THE PROPRIETIES OF THE QUR'AN

*Sayyidunā 'Abd Allāh ibn Mas'ud* ﷺ said, "If you seek knowledge then ponder into the meanings of the Qur'an." The Qur'an is a trove of sacred knowledge and guidance for all times, but to acquire this knowledge one must fulfill the necessary conditions and proprieties of the Qur'an. Unfortunately, we live in an era where once a person learns a bit of the Arabic language and memorizes the translation of the Qur'an, he thinks he has the right to make his own opinions regarding the Qur'an. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Whosoever explains the Qur'an from his own opinion is wrong even if he is right."[1]

Modernists generally ignore the opinions and exegesis of the pious predecessors [*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥūn*] issuing fatwas that are based on their own whims. In our time, the modernist desires to embody all the greatest attributes in every field. If he can write simple Arabic, articulate himself in his native language, or deliver impromptu speeches, he sees himself the teacher of Junaid and Shiblī in Taṣawwuf and also a mujtahid in fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence). He introduces new ideas in the exegesis of the Qur'an without concern for the opinions of the pious predecessors or that his opinions contradict the aḥādīth of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ.

He is whimsical in matters of Dīn. He states his heart's desire no matter how much it contradicts the Qur'an and the Sunna. Despite this, no one discredits him, protests his incompetence, or shows him his deviation.

If one gathers the courage to say, "This is against the teachings of the pious predecessors," he is immediately branded a sycophant of the pious predecessors. He is condemned as ultra-orthodox, anti-intellectual, and someone not attuned to the modern world. Conversely, if a person rejects the explanations of the pious predecessors and lays out his own views on matters of Dīn he is looked upon as an authority [*muḥaqqiq*] in the Dīn.

## FIFTEEN SCIENCES OF THE QUR'AN

This is despite the fact that the exegetists [*mufassirūn*] listed fifteen sciences that must be mastered before one can authoritatively interpret the Qur'an. These are:

1. Classical Arabic is how one learns the meaning of each word. Mujāhid said, "It is not permissible for one who holds faith in Allah ﷻ and the Day of Judgment to speak on the Qur'an without learning classical Arabic." In this respect, it should be known that classical Arabic must be mastered in its entirety because one word may have various meanings. A person may only know two or three meanings to one word whereas the meaning of that same word in the Qur'an may be altogether different.
2. The Science of Arabic Syntax [*ʿIlm al-Naḥw*] is important because any change in the diacritical marks affects the meaning, and understanding the diacritical marks depends on the science of Arabic Syntax.
3. The Science of Arabic Morphology [*ʿIlm al-Ṣarf*] is important because changes in the conjugations of nouns and verbs change the meaning. Ibn Fāris said, "A person who misses out on Arabic morphology has missed out on a lot." Zamakhsharī writes in *ʿUjūbāt al-Tafsīr* that,
   One man recited the aya:

   يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ

   [*Think of*] *the day when We will call every people with their books of deeds.*[2]

Because of his ignorance of Arabic morphology, he mistranslated the aya as:

[*Think of*] *the day when We will call every people by their mothers.*

He thought the word *imām*, which is singular, was the plural of *umm* [mother]. Had he known morphology he would know that *imām* is not the plural of *umm*.

4 The Science of Arabic Etymology [*'Ilm al-Ishtiqāq*] should be learned because sometimes one word derives from two root words, the meaning of each root word being different. This science explains the reciprocal relation and radical composition between the root and derived word. For example, *masḥ* derives from the root word *masaḥ* which means 'to feel and touch something with a wet hand,' but also derives from the root word *masīḥa* which means 'to measure.'

5 Arabic Semantics [*'Ilm al-Ma'ānī*] is the science which teaches about phrase construction and its implications on meaning.

6 The Science of Expression [*'Ilm al-Bayān*] is the science by which one learns the similes, metaphors, metonymies, evident [*ẓuhur*] and hidden meanings [*khafī*] of the Arabic language.

7 The Science of Rhetoric [*'Ilm al-Badī'*] is the science through which one learns to interpret sentences which reveal the beauty and eloquence of the spoken and written word. The above mentioned three sciences are categorized as the Science of Eloquence [*'Ilm al-Balāgha*]. It is one of the most indispensable tools for the exegete because he is able to reveal the miraculous nature of the Qur'an through these three sciences.

8 The Science of Arabic Pronunciation [*'Ilm al-Qirā'a*] is important because one reading [*qirā'a*] of the Qur'an may differ in meaning from another, and one learns to favor one reading over another based on the difference in the meanings.

9 The Science of Islamic Doctrine [*'Ilm al-'Aqāid*] is important because we cannot attribute the literal meaning of certain ayas to Allah ﷻ. In this case, one will be required to interpret the aya, as in the aya, 'Allah ﷻ's hand is over their hand.'[3]

10 The Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence [*Uṣūl al-Fiqh*] are important so one understands the methodology of legal derivation and interpretation.

11 The Science of Circumstances of Revelation [*Asbāb al-Nuzūl*] is the field by which one learns the circumstances in which an aya is revealed. It is an important science because the meaning of the aya is more clearly understood once the circumstances in which it was revealed is known. Sometimes, the meaning of an aya is wholly dependent on its historical background.

12 The Science of Abrogated and Abrogating Ayas [*'Ilm al-Naskh*] is important because abrogated rulings must be differentiated from the applied rulings.

13 Islamic Jurisprudence is important because one cannot gain an overview of any issue until he has understood its particulars.

14 The Science of Aḥādīth [*'Ilm al-Ḥadith*] is important because the aḥādīth explain general [*mujmal*] ayas.

15 The Endowed Knowledge [*al-'Ilm al-Ladunī*] which Allah سبحانه وتعالى grants to his closest servants. They are the servants indicated in the hadith: "Allah سبحانه وتعالى will grant one who acts upon whatever he knows from a knowledge he never knew."[4]

## FOUNDATIONS OF THE SHARI'A

The authorities on the principles of fiqh [*uṣūliyyūn*] write that to follow the Shari'a, one must have knowledge of the four foundations upon which the Shari'a rests. They are:

1 Qur'an

2 Aḥādīth

3 [Scholarly] Consensus [*Ijmā'*]

4 Analogical Deduction [*Qiyās*] by which one derives rulings from the above three.

## CONDITIONS FOR ACTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE QUR'AN

Then, to act in accordance with the Qur'an one must know four things:

I The words of the Qur'an [*naẓm al-Qur'ān*], their conjugations and root words. They are of four types:

1 The general [*'āmm*]
2 The specific [*khāṣ*]
3 The homonym [*mushtarak*]
4 The interpreted meaning [*mu'awwal*]

II The methodology Allah ﷻ uses to present his message in the Qur'an [*wujūh-al-bayān*]. This is also of four types:

1 The manifest [*ẓāhir*]
2 The second type of manifest [*naṣṣ*]
3 The unequivocal [*mufassar*]
4 The transparent [*muḥkam*]

III Then, these four types are contrasted with four other types:

1 The obscure [*khafī*]
2 The difficult [*mushkil*]
3 The ambivalent [*mujmal*]
4 The intricate [*mutashābih*]

IV Knowledge of the application of the words of the Qur'an [*naẓm al-Qur'ān*]. This is also of four types:

1 The literal [*ḥaqīqī*]
2 The metaphorical [*majāz*]
3 The plain [*ṣarīḥ*]
4 The allusive [*kināya*]

V Then, methodology of understanding the meanings of the Qur'an. This is also of four types:

1 The explicit meaning [*'ibārat al-naṣṣ*]
2 The allusive meaning [*ishārat al-naṣṣ*]

3 The inferred meaning [*dalālat al-naṣṣ*]
4 The required meaning [*iqtiḍa' al-naṣṣ*][5]

After all of this, there is one more category that encompasses all the above. This category is also of four types:

1 Sources of Derivation [*ma'khadh al-ishtiqāq*] is knowledge of the sources from which the derivation is made.
2 Knowledge of the terminological concepts of the sources of derivation.
3 Knowledge of the sequence of the sources of derivation.
4 Knowledge of the rulings derived from the sources of derivation.

## CONCLUSION

It is important to know when an order [*amr*] indicates obligation, permissibility, desirability, and when it is merely for repetition. In the Qur'an, an order may require immediate fulfillment of the order [*adā*] or sometimes belated fulfillment [*qaḍā*] while at other times vice versa. Furthermore, an order can be general or restricted. A restricted order is of four types. One will find the details of this in the books on the subject of the principles of Islamic Jurisprudence [*uṣūl al-fiqh*].[6]

Mu'ādh ibn Jabal ﵁ said in a hadith of *Abū Dāwūd*:

> After you, the times of tribulation [*fitan*] will appear; there will be an abundance of wealth and the Qur'an will be opened by everyone: a believer, hypocrite, a man, a woman, old and young, slaves and freemen will all read it. Then one amongst them will say, 'Why don't people follow me though I am learned in the Qur'an? They will not follow me until I bring something new.' Mu'ādh ﵁ then said, 'Save yourself from the innovations [*bid'a*] because every innovation will be a deviation.'[7]

According to the above mentioned hadith, those who make grandiose claims about spreading the message of the Qur'an around the world are deviant people. Translating the Qur'an for the blessing of translation is

good. However, to derive rulings without sound knowledge of the different sciences [as quoted above] is forbidden. Rulings can only be derived when one gains complete knowledge of those sciences which are necessary for deriving rulings from the Qur'an. In *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, it is narrated from Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that he said of the aya:

يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ

*He gives wisdom to whom He wills.*[8]

> This is reference to knowledge of the Qur'an, knowledge of abrogating and abrogated ayas, transparent [*muḥkam*] and intricate [*mutashābih*] ayas, the chronology of each aya, what is forbidden and what is permissible and knowledge of other matters of the same kind.

## ENDNOTES

1 Abū Dāwūd, *al-Kalām fī Kitāb Allāh*

2 17:71

3 10:48

4 *Kanz al-'Ummāl, al-Bāb al-Awwal fi al-Targhīb fi al-Ḥilm*

5 Please see appendix I for a more detailed explanation of fiqh terminology.

6 *Nūr al-Anwār*

7 Abū Dāwūd, *Luzūm al-Sunna*

8 2:269

الثَّانِي

# Chapter Two

# HADITH

## TYPES OF HADITH

*The authorities* in the science of Islamic Law state that the same sciences of knowledge necessary for the Qur'an [as previously mentioned] are necessary for the aḥādīth. As for the presumptive [*ẓannī*] aḥādīth,[1] they require some additional sciences.

Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī writes in his book on the principles of hadith [*uṣūl al-ḥadīth*], *Nukhbat al-Fikr*:

> A mass-transmitted report [*mutawātir*] is a hadith narrated by such a large multitude of people that one cannot imagine that they conspired to forge it, and in which the number of narrators throughout the times was numerous. This type of hadith conveys sure knowledge and is equivalent to an aya of the Qur'an.
>
> A well-known report [*mashhūr*] is a hadith in which the number of narrators dwindled at some point [in the chain of transmission] and did not remain numerous.
>
> A rare report [*'azīz*] is a hadith in which the number of narrators at some point in the chain of transmission is only two people.
>
> A solitary report [*gharīb*] is a hadith in which the number of narrators throughout the chain of transmission is only one person.

The last two types of hadith [*ʿazīz* and *gharīb*] are categorized as a singular chain of transmission [*khabr wāḥid*] some of which are accepted while others rejected. The rejection or acceptance of a singular chain of transmission is based on a complete background check of each narrator. There are many types of solitary hadith [*gharīb*]. The solitariness may be in the beginning or end of the chain of transmission. The singular transmission is authentic if the narrator of the transmission is trustworthy in his memorization of the hadith. The transmission of the hadith must be continuous [it does not break anywhere through a missing narrator] and is not a hadith with a hidden defect [*muʿallal*] or a single authentic hadith which opposes a greater number of authentic aḥādīth [*shādh*]. The level of authenticity of the hadith varies depending on the level of opposition [*shudhūdh*] or hidden weakness [*ʿilla*] found in the hadith.

The highest level of authenticity in a hadith is sound in itself [*ṣaḥīḥ li dhātihī*], then sound through corroboration [*ṣaḥīḥ li ghairihī*], then thoroughly reliable in itself [*ḥasan li dhātihī*] and finally, reliable through corroboration [*ḥasan li ghairihī*]. Another aspect in the science of hadith is whether the hadith is *munkar* or *mʿarūf*. If the hadith is stronger than the hadith it contradicts because of the strength of its number in the chain or the integrity of its narrators, it is a preserved hadith [*maḥfūẓ*]. Then we must check if it is supported by corroborative hadith from the same Companion ﷺ with different chains of transmission [*matābiʿ*] or supportive aḥādīth from different Companions ﷺ [*shāhid*] or not. The definition of these different types of aḥādīth should be known to measure the veracity of the hadith. If a contradiction between two aḥādīth can be reconciled they are reconcilable aḥādīth [*mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*]. If the contradiction cannot be lifted but we know the chronology of the two hadith, then the first of the two aḥādīth will be the abrogated hadith [*mansūkh*] and the second the abrogating hadith [*nāsikh*]. If the chronology is unknown, we will favor one hadith over the other using the principles of preference [*tarjīḥ*].

Ḥazimī writes in his book *Kitab al-Iʿtibār* that there are fifty principles of preference by which we ascertain which hadith is more acceptable. Suyuṭī in *Tadrīb al-Rāwī* writes that other scholars have mentioned more than a hundred tools of preference. Later, we will read a detailed

essay by Ibn Taimiyya in which he outlines ten reasons for rejecting a hadith. He then says:

> These reasons are apparent, though some aḥādīth are of the type that a prodigious scholar will see reason for us to not follow them without revealing the reason. This is because the plains of knowledge are vast and we cannot understand everything that was in the minds of these scholars. At times he presents his proof while at other times he may not. Even when he does present his proof, many times we hear his proof while at other times we do not. Even if his proof reaches us, sometimes we understand his proof and sometimes we do not.[2]

Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī said, "We will not adopt any opinion if there is no reason to favor one hadith over the other." Sometimes a narration is rejected because of a missing link between two narrators and sometimes because of questionable character in a narrator. A narration is incompletely transmitted [*mursal*] if the missing narrator is in the era of the Companions ﷺ. It is a suspended hadith [*muʿallaq*] if the missing narrator appears from the other end of the chain [e.g., teacher of Imam Bukhārī, Ibn Māja]. The hadith is discontinuous [*munqatiʿ*] if the missing narrator is in the middle of the chain. If two or more than two narrators are missing, the hadith is straitened [*muʿaḍḍal*]. If the missing link is evident, it is plainly discontinuous [*munqatiʿ*]; however, if it is hidden, it is disguised [*mudallas*].

## THE TRUE SCHOLARSHIP OF HADITH

Then there are ten reasons a narrator is declared unreliable. In order to use the aḥādīth as evidence, it is important to understand the principles of hadith criticism. We mentioned a few types of aḥādīth as examples. Besides these, Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī mentioned:

- A Reversed Hadith [*Maqlūb*]
- A Disrupted Hadith [*Muḍtarib*]
- A Dot-Distorted Hadith [*Muṣaḥḥaf*]
- A Vowel-Distorted Hadith [*Muḥarraf*]
- Attribution of a Narration to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ [*Marfūʿ*]

- Attribution of a Narration to a Companion ﵁ [*Mauqūf*]
- Attribution of a Narration to a First Successor [*Maqṭū'*]
- An Authoritative Transmission [*Musnad*]
- An Absolute High-ranking Transmission [*al-'Aluww al-Muṭlaq*]
- A Relatively High-ranking Transmission [*al-'Aluww al-Nasabī*]

Then, within the last two types of hadith [the absolute and relative authoritative hadith] one must be learned in discussions on:

- The Equal Transmission [*al-Musāwāt*]
- The Handshake Transmission [*Muṣāfaḥa*]
- A Descending Transmission [*Nuzūl*]
- A Contemporary Transmission [*Aqrān*]
- The Reciprocal Transmission [*Mudabbaj*]
- Transmission of the Elders from the Juniors [*Riwāyat al-Akābir 'an al-Aṣāghir*]
- The Preceder and the Follower Transmission [*Al-Sābiq wa al-Lāḥiq*]
- The Faithful Transmission [*Musalsal*]
- The Unified Transmission [*Muttafiq*]
- The Differential Transmission [*Muftariq*]
- The Concordant Transmission [*Mu'talif*]
- The Discordant Transmission [*Mukhtalif*]
- The Resembling Transmission [*Mutashābih*][3]

One cannot become a hadith master and deduce juridical rulings simply by reading the translations of hadith books. As for the aforementioned discussions, Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī himself writes that the principles of aḥādīth cannot be condensed and that one must study the encyclopedic works [*muṭawwalāt*] on this subject to gain a complete understanding of this science. Merely reading the translation of a hadith or reading a book on the the virtues of aḥādīth is surely not enough. Becoming a master of hadith is a most arduous task.

Likewise, reading the translation of the Qur'an does not give insight into the Qur'an until one learns all the necessary sciences related to the Qur'an. Otherwise, there is a large chance of making grave mistakes in the Qur'an. One deviant was of the habit that whenever he returned from the call of nature

he performed ablution [*wuḍū*] and prayed three units [*raka'*] of ṣalāt [*witr*]. Someone asked him, "What do you pray?" He said, "It says in the hadith:

مَنِ اسْتَجْمَرَ فَلْيُوْتِرْ

'Whosoever attends the call of nature, should pray the three unit ṣalāt.'[4]

However, the meaning of this hadith is that whenever one attends the call of nature one should use an odd number [*witr*] of clods to purify himself. The mistake he made was to translate the word '*fa al-yūtir*' as '*witr.'*

Likewise, one man would not allow the water from his well to be channeled into the fields of another because the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said in the hadith:

وَلَا يَسْقِى اَحَدُكُمْ مَاءَهُ زَرْعَ غَيْرِهِ

'Your water should not feed the fields of another.'[5]

However, the meaning of this hadith is that when a woman, for example a slavegirl, is pregnant by one man and he sells her to another, the new owner should not have intercourse with her. The word '*mā'*' refers to semen and '*zar'a*' to the woman's private parts. Ibn Jauzī narrates many more such examples in his book, *Talbīs al-Iblīs*.

A hadith in *Abū Dāwūd* narrates that someone asked 'Imrān ibn Ḥusain ﷺ, "You narrate many aḥādīth that have no mention in the Qur'an?" He became angry and said, "Have you ever read anywhere that you must pay one dirham for every forty dirham in zakāt, you must give this and that many goats when you own such and such number of goats in zakāt, and this and that many camels if you own such and such number of camels in the Qur'an?" The man replied, "No." 'Imrān ﷺ said, "Then, where did you get these rulings from? You learned them from us and we learned them from the Blessed Prophet ﷺ."[6]

Likewise he mentioned many other specific rulings on various issues besides zakāt that are not mentioned in the Qur'an. This indicates that in order to understand the Qur'an, it is necessary to know the aḥādīth. And to know both the Qur'an and aḥādīth it is necessary to learn all the different sciences and fields of knowledge mentioned above.

## IMAM BUKHĀRĪ'S QUARTET

I would like to conclude this chapter with Imam Bukhārī's quartet better known as the *Rubā'yiāt al-Bukhārī*, which has already been mentioned in the introduction [*muqaddama*] of *Aujaz al-Masālik* and in my other book, *Ikhtilāf al-A'imma*. It is reproduced here both from *Ikhtilāf al-A'imma* and *Aujaz*:

The hadith masters established the strictest rules for one who wishes to busy himself, gain insight into, and speak or write on the subject of the science of hadith. They also established rules to aid the student in his study of the aḥādīth. Their rules and restrictions are more demanding of the teacher and the hadith master. Though this chapter has drawn on quite a while, it is an opportune time to relate the interesting story of Imam Bukhārī. It is a story which shows us the hardships the pious predecessors expected one to overcome in order to gain knowledge of aḥādīth. He himself was a person who struggled hard in this path as a student and who achieved the status of a hadith master in this field.

Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad says, "When Walīd ibn Ibrāhīm was dismissed from his position as the judge [*qāḍī*] of Rai [now a suburb of Tehran], he moved to Bukhārā. My teacher, Abū Ibrāhīm Khattalī, took me to meet him. When we met him we requested that he narrate all the aḥādīth he had heard from our spiritual mentors and elders. Walīd said, 'I did not hear any narrations or any aḥādīth.' My teacher was shocked. He asked, 'You are such a great jurist [*faqīh*] and you say such a thing?' Walīd then told his story; he said, 'When I reached adulthood and was eager to study the science of hadith I came to Imam Bukhārī and explained my situation to him. He advised me and said, 'Listen, my son. Whenever you begin a subject you first learn its prerequisites. Make the intention to learn the subject once you have understood its prerequisites and objectives. Now listen! A man cannot be an accomplished scholar of hadith until he writes four things with four thing like four things with four things as four things in four time periods in four situations in four places on four things to four types of people for four reasons; and these quartets cannot be gained but with four things which must be with four other things. When all these are attained, then four things become easy upon him and he is put into hardship by four things. And when he is patient with these four things, Allah ﷻ honors him with four things in the material world and four things in the Hereafter.'

I said to him, 'May Allah ﷻ have mercy upon you. Please explain these quartets for me.' He said, "Of course, listen! The four things which one must write are:

1. The beautiful aḥādīth of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and his rulings
2. The sayings of the Companions ﷺ and the status of each Companion ﷺ
3. The sayings of the First Successors, their caliber and who amongst them was reliable or unreliable
4. Knowledge of all the narrators who narrated aḥādīth and their background

The history of the narrators must include four things:

1. Their biographies [*asmā al-rijāl*]
2. Their agnomens [*kunya*]
3. Where they settled and lived
4. Their date of birth and date of death [to verify whether the narrator met the people whom he claimed to narrate from]

These four things are as necessary as four things with four things:

1. Sermon [*khuṭba*] with praise and exaltation of Allah ﷻ [*ḥamd* and *thanā*]
2. To send blessings and salutations [*salāt* and *salām*] with the names of prophets
3. *Bism Allāh* with a sura
4. The opening *takbīr* of ṣalāt [*al-takbīr al-taḥrīma*] with ṣalāt

And like four things:

1. The aḥādīth with an unbroken transmission to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ [*musnad*]
2. The aḥādīth transmitted by one of the First Successors to the Companions ﷺ from the Blessed Prophet ﷺ with the name of the Companion ﷺ omitted [*mursal*]
3. Sayings of the Companions ﷺ [*Mauqūf*]
4. Sayings of the First Successors [*Maqṭū'*]

These are four different branches in the science of hadith which can only be attained in four different periods:

1 Childhood
2 Near adulthood
3 After adulthood
4 Before old age

And the means of attaining these four branches in different situations is:

1 In preoccupation
2 In free time
3 In poverty
4 In affluence

In essence, a person should be incessantly preoccupied with the attainment of these four branches, in four places:

1 In the mountains
2 In the rivers
3 In the cities
4 In the rural areas and jungles

In essence, a person should travel wherever a teacher [*mu'allim*] of hadith may be to learn the hadith from him on four things:

1 On the rocks
2 On oysters
3 On leather
4 On bones

In essence, he should learn from him on anything until he obtains paper and gets the opportunity to write on it. He should write on whatever is available to preserve the essence of knowledge. And he must learn this from four types of people:

1 One who is older than him
2 Younger than him

3 Equal to him
4 From the books of his father with the condition that he understands his father's writing style

In essence, he should learn from whoever he can. He should not hesitate, thinking it beneath him, to learn from his equal or someone younger than him. He should do all this with four intentions:

1 For the pleasure of Allah ﷻ [It is obligatory upon the servant to keep his Master happy]
2 Acting upon all the knowledge that is in accordance with the Qur'an
3 To transfer knowledge to students and earnest knowledge seekers
4 To keep the torch of guidance alight after putting it into writing

And all of these things cannot be gained but with four things:

1 His efforts and toil
2 The art of penmanship and writing
3 Linguistics, by which he learns meanings and concepts of words
4 Arabic morphology and syntax by which one can discern the correctness of words and sentences

All of these four things are dependent on four things which are otherwise unattainable except by the mercy and gift of Allah ﷻ:

1 Health
2 Ability
3 Eagerness for knowledge
4 Sharp memory

And when all these are attained, four things become contemptible to him [due to his thirst for knowledge]:

1 Wife
2 Children
3 Wealth
4 Home

And then this person is tested by four things:

1. Enemies who rejoice at his misfortune
2. Criticism of his friends
3. Contempt of the ignorant
4. Jealousy of the scholars

And when a person is patient with these four things Allah ﷻ grants him four things in the material world and four things in the Hereafter. The four things of the material world are:

1. Respect and contentment [*qanāʿ*]
2. Dignity and the ability to inspire with certitude [*yaqīn*]
3. Sweetness of knowledge
4. A long life

The four things of the Hereafter are:

1. Intercession on behalf of whomever he wishes
2. Shade under the throne of Allah ﷻ on the day when there will be no other shade
3. Ability to give water from the basin [*hauḍ*] of *Kauthar* to whomever he wishes
4. Proximity to the prophet of Allah ﷺ in the highest abode in Paradise [*Aʿlā al-ʿIlliyyīn*]

This is all, my son. I have summed up for you everything I heard in different gatherings from my elders. Now it is your choice whether you wish to busy yourself in the knowledge of aḥādīth or not."

## ENDNOTES

1 A presumptive hadith is a hadith which is not mass-transmitted [*mutawātir*] or well-known [*mashhūr*] and only has one narrator per link in its chain of transmission. It is called presumptive because [though it may be an authentic hadith] it does not create certainty of knowledge like mass-transmitted and well-known aḥādīth.

2 *Raf' al-Malām,* Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Taimiyya

3 Please see appendix II for a more detailed explanation of the hadith terminology

4 Ibn Māja, al-Irtiyād li al-Gāiṭ wa al-Baul

5 Abū Dāwūd, fī Waṭ' al-Sabāyā

6 Abū Dāwūd, mā Tajibu fi al-Zakā

الثالث

Chapter Three

# Fiqh

## WHAT IS FIQH?

*The most recognized definition* of fiqh amongst the jurists is:

> Fiqh is knowledge of derivative rulings taken from in-depth evidences of the Qur'an and Sunna. Imam Abū Ḥanīfa said, 'Fiqh is knowledge [*ma'rifa*] of the self and that which is beneficial and harmful to it.' This a broad definition which includes everything from beliefs to all deeds related to the esoteric [spiritual] and exoteric [physical].

Succeeding scholars brought all the branches related to matters of belief under the umbrella of the Science of Doctrine [*'Ilm al-Kalām*], the branches related to spiritual rectification under the Science of Morals [*'Ilm al-Akhlāq*] or Taṣawwuf, and the branches related to exoteric deeds under *fiqh*.

In the introduction of *Kanz al-Daqā'iq,*[1] Shaikh I'zāz 'Alī narrates from Hāwī Quddūsī that fiqh linguistically means '*tafaqquh*' or 'to be aware of.' In the Shari'a, it refers to a special type of awareness that is distinct from the understanding gained from the meaning of the text [i.e., the Qur'an and Sunna] and its intimations, sense, and requirements. In another place, he writes that *tafaqquh* is a quality, an aptitude by which

one can discern the correct evidences from the Qur'an and the Sunna and by which one can sense what is intellectually more sound.

The sources of fiqh are: the Qur'an, the authentic Sunna, [scholarly] consensus, and analogical deduction, which have already been cited from *Nūr al-Anwār*. Therefore, all the sciences and fields of knowledge required for understanding the Qur'an and Sunna are also required for the understanding of fiqh.

Shaikh Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī writes in his book *al-Takashshuf*, "Shari'a is the name of the complete and comprehensive collection of practical rulings." This definition is inclusive of all deeds, both esoteric and exoteric. The term fiqh was used in this sense amongst the earlier scholars [*mutaqaddimūn*]. For example, Imam Abū Ḥanīfa defined fiqh as:

مَعْرِفَةُ النَّفْسِ مَا لَهَا وَمَا عَلَيهَا

"Fiqh is knowledge of the self and that which is beneficial and harmful to it."

Then, fiqh became known amongst the later scholars [*mut'akhkhirūn*] as knowledge of the exoteric deeds while Taṣawwuf knowledge of the esoteric deeds.[2] Shaikh Thānwī makes this same point in *Imdād al-Fatāwā*.

'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī wrote a book called *al-Mīzān al-Kubrā*. I enjoyed this book and read it repeatedly during my last years of study and the beginning of my teaching years. The main idea behind his book is that there is no disagreement between the mujtahids. Whatever is seen as disagreement is due to the difference in the times in which they lived.

For example, Imam Abū Ḥanīfa negated raising the hands [*rafa' al-yadain*] because of the condition of the Muslims in his time while Imam Shāfi'ī necessitated it according to his time. Imam Abū Ḥanīfa lived in the golden era and the meaning of raising the hands was "throwing the material world away behind one's back." In his time, ṣalāt was prayed with perfect concentration and once it began, the material world was removed for good. In the time of Imam Shāfi'ī, who was born the year Imam Abū Ḥanīfa passed away, the material world made its way back in the ṣalāt. This is why he ruled that the hands should be raised repeatedly during the ṣalāt to thow back the material world. Also, Imam Shāfi'ī's view was that touching the private part broke the ablution. This ruling

applied to the saintly scholars while the more liberal ruling, that it did not, was applicable to the general public. However, the Ḥanafīs exercise caution in this regard and say that if the private part is touched then ablution should be performed to distance oneself from any disagreement between the four imams.[3]

## ENDNOTES

1 A textbook on Ḥanafī fiqh

2 al-Takashshuf, p 184

3 al-Mīzān al-Kubrā, p 130

الرَّابِعُ

Chapter Four

# Ijtihād

## DEFINITION OF IJTIHĀD

*On the question of ijtihād,* Mufti Shafī' writes in *Jawāhir al-Fiqh* that the pious predecessors estabished a criterion for the mujtahid who is to be followed. Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī wrote in *'Iqd al-Jīd,* that the most precise definition of ijtihād understood from the scholars is, "to work arduously to yield derivative knowledge from specific sources." These specific sources are:

Qur'an

Sunna

[Scholarly] Consensus

Analogical Deduction

## CONDITIONS FOR BEING A MUJTAHID

One of the conditions for one practicing ijtihād is that he should be well-versed in those areas of the Qur'an and Sunna from which rulings are derived. He should also be well-versed in the areas of [scholarly] consensus; the conditions for the correct use of analogical deduction; a broad and

deep knowledge of Arabic linguisticsl; and the abrogated and abrogating ayas. He should also be learned in the biographies of the narrators. In ijtihād, knowledge of the science of Islamic doctrine and conventional fiqh is not necessary. The conditions of ijtihād are covered in the books on the principles of Islamic Jurisprudence. At this point, there is no harm in narrating the conditions Baghawī laid out for ijtihād. He said:

> "A mujtahid is a scholar who is proficient in five fields of knowledge:
>
> – Knowledge of the Qur'anic ayas
> – Knowledge of the aḥādīth of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ
> – Knowledge of the sayings of the pious predecessors; i.e., to know which rulings they disagreed upon and upon which they were unanimous
> – Knowledge of Arabic linguistics
> – Knowledge of analogical deduction, the knowledge by which one learns the method of deriving a ruling from the Qur'an and Sunna. In that case, a ruling should not be explicit in the Qur'an and Sunna or [scholarly] consensus. If there is no derivation required due to the explicitness of the ruling in the Qur'an and Sunna, then such a person [who lays out an explicit ruling] is not by definition a mujtahid.

Now, it is important for us to know how much of each of these fields of knowledge a mujtahid should have mastered. As for the Qur'an, he is required to know all that has already been mentioned in the chapter on the Qur'an and also the abrogated and abrogating ayas. And in the hadith he should know the sciences necessary for knowledge of hadith and also the ability to distinguish between authentic and weak hadith. It is also incumbent upon him to be fully versed in Arabic linguistics. This means that he should have an almost perfect knowledge of the words used in the ayas and aḥādīth on the commandments [*aḥkām*]. However, he need not necessarily have memorized and learned the whole vocabulary of classical Arabic. It is best that he busy himself in learning the language as much as is necessary for him to become familiar with the meaning and message of classical Arabic discourse. This is because the medium of the Shari'a is Arabic; therefore, the one who is uninformed in Arabic will not understand the underlying meanings of the sayings of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ.

He should also have learned the sayings of the Companions ﷺ and First Successors regarding the commandments of Dīn. He should also have knowledge of the fatwas of the jurists in order to avoid deriving rulings that contradict their opinions and the decisions upon which there is consensus of the community. If and when a person is learned in these five fields of knowledge he will be considered a mujtahid, though it is not expected of him to have covered the infinitesimal aspects of each of these fields. However, if he is lacking in any one of them, he must follow someone else."

Ibn Qudāma Ḥanbalī writes in *al-Mughnī*:[1]

"There are six conditions for being a mujtahid.

- Mastering knowledge of the Qur'an
- Mastering knowledge of the aḥādīth
- Mastering knowledge of the [scholarly] consensus
- Mastering knowledge of analogical deduction
- Mastering knowledge of the differences of opinion
- Mastering knowledge of classical Arabic linguistics

For the Qur'an he must know two things; the general [*'āmm*] and the specific [*khāṣṣ*] [previously mentioned in the chapter on acting on the Qur'an]. In the aḥādīth, it is not necessary for him to know every hadith, as in the aḥādīth on Paradise and the Hellfire, but to know those aḥādīth which pertain to the commandments of Dīn. All the sciences necessary for the Qur'an are also required for aḥādīth. Besides this, there are different types of aḥādīth, such as the singularly transmitted aḥādīth [*aḥād*]. They must also know the rulings upon which the scholars unanimously agreed and upon which they disagreed. In analogical deduction, they must know its conditions and the different methods of derivation amongst other things. They should also be acquainted with Arabic linguistics in as much as is related to the aforementioned fields."

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Qayyim writes in *I'lām al-Muwaqqi'īn*[2]:

> Khaṭīb quoted Imam Shāfi'ī in his book *al-Faqī wa al-Mutafaqqih,* as saying that it is not permissible for anyone to give fatwa on any matter of Dīn except if he is a scholar of the Book of Allah ﷻ; is learned in abrogating and abrogated ayas; the unequivocal ayas

> [*muḥkam*]; the ambiguous ayas [*mutashābih*]; interpretation [*ta'wīl*]; background of the revelation; the ayas revealed in Makka and in Madina; and has insight into the underlying meaning of the ayas. Further, he should be learned in the aḥādīth, in the abrogating and abrogated aḥādīth, and all the different sciences required for the Qur'an. Then he should also be skilled in Arabic linguistics and poetry and an expert in all the fields that are requisite for a complete understanding of the Qur'an and Sunna. After all this, he should also be acquainted with the sayings of the scholars. All these fields should become second nature to him due to his proficiency in them. After this, he may give fatwa; otherwise it is forbidden. Sāliḥ ibn Aḥmad says: I said to my father [Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal], 'What do you think of a person who when asked a fatwa, issues it according to the hadith but without any knowledge of fiqh?' He replied, 'It is absolutely necessary for one who sits in the place of fatwa to know the ways of the Qur'an, to be impeccable in his knowledge of the aḥādīth and to be a scholar of authentic chains of transmission.' Then, Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal quoted everything Imam Shāfi'ī mentioned previously. Once someone asked 'Abd Allāh ibn Mubārak, 'When is it permissible for someone to give fatwa?' He replied, 'When he carries profound insight in his opinion and in the aḥādīth.'

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Qayyim says, "By opinion, he is referring to true analogical deduction, the underlying meanings and principles upon which the whole foundation of the sayings of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ is based. This makes the rulings of the Dīn effective."[3]

Shāh Walī Allah ﵀ Dehlawī writes in *'Iqd al-Jīd*:

> Whoever is erudite in the greater part of these branches of knowledge is a mujtahid.

Rafi'ī, Nawawī and numerous other scholars say that there are two types of mujtahids: independent [*mustaqill*] and affiliated [*muntasib*]. It is evident from their writings that an independent mujtahid is greatest in three things:

1. He derives the principles upon which his madhhab stands.
2. He studies, researches, and engrosses himself in the verses and aḥādīth of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ to find proof for issues that

confront him. He favors one proof over the other when they contradict each other. He also expounds on the references from which he derived his rulings.

3 He confronts new issues which have not yet been discussed and presents them in light of evidence [from the Qur'an and Sunna].

An affiliated mujtahid is one who is a follower of his teacher in the principles and who takes help from him in seeking evidence on rulings. He knows the rulings in light of their evidence and is fully capable of deriving rulings from the evidence. Whoever is below these two is a mujtahid in the madhhab [*mujtahid fi al-madhhab*]. He is a follower of his imam in any ruling attributed to the imam, but is also fully aware of the principles his imam used to derive the rulings. If he cannot find a ruling on an issue from his imam, he exercises ijtihād using his teacher's principles and, in general, derives rulings based on the framework of these principles.

The last level is the *muftī* who is infused with the knowledge of his madhhab and has the competence to prefer one opinion over the other [in one ruling within a madhhab].

## TYPES OF MUJTAHIDS

Ibn 'Ābidīn in his booklet, *Sharḥ 'Ūqūd Rasm al-Muftī,* explains the seven types of mujtahids:

Mujtahid in the Shari'a [*Mujtahid fi al-Shar'*]: These are the four imams who devised the principles and derived rulings from the four main sources without following anyone in fundamental or derivative rulings.

Mujtahid in a madhhab [*Mujtahid fi al-madhhab*]: As in Imam Abū Yūsuf and Imam Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Shaibānī and all the students of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa who derived rulings using the principles which he derived from the main sources. Although they disagreed in some derivative rulings with Imam Abū Ḥanīfa, they are his followers in the principles. The difference between the mujtahid in madhhab and parallel scholars [*mu'āriḍīn fi al-madhhab*]

like Imam Shāfi'ī is that the mujtahid in madhhab are Imam Abū Ḥanīfa's followers in the principles while [other mujtahids like] Imam Shāfi'ī are not.

Mujtahid in rulings [*Mujtahid fi al-Masā'il*]: They practice ijtihād in the rulings in which there is no known opinion of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa. This category includes scholars like Khaṣṣāf, Ṭaḥāwī, Shams al-A'imma Ḥalwānī, Shams al-Sarakhsī, Fakhr al-Islam Bazdawī, and Qāḍī Khān, etc. This group of scholars follows Imam Abū Ḥanīfa in his principles and his derivative rulings, but derives rulings based on his principles on issues in which there is no known opinion or ruling by Imam Abū Ḥanīfa.

The Deducers [*Aṣḥāb al-Takhrīj*]: As in Abū Bakr Rāzī, etc. They are capable of correctly interpreting a general ruling which carries the possibility of two different interpretations.

The Preponderers [*Aṣḥāb al-Tarjīḥ*]: As in Qudūrī and Marghīnānī, etc. They are best at putting different opinions of one ruling in their respective places. For example, they may categorize an opinion as correct, the most virtuous, or that which is 'easiest upon the people' based on their situations.

The Followers [*Muqallidūn*]: They can examine and discern the strongest or the weakest of opinions of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa on one issue. They also can distinguish which of the opinions in one ruling is the most reliable [*ẓāhir al-riwāya*] and which is the most estranged [*nādir*].

This category consists of the second type of followers [who put their trust in the opinion of others without asking for proof] who do not possess any of the capabilities of the aforementioned categories. They cannot even differentiate between the more and less reliable opinion or the preferred or rejected opinion.

## TOOLS OF IJTIHĀD

Shaikh I'zāz Alī said of the different aspects of ijtihād, "The technical definition of ijtihād is to exert one's effort by the order of the Shari'a to deduce an opinion." Then he mentions the various conditions of ijtihād which we have already covered. After this, he says:

These are the tools of the mujtahid. Whoever claims to practice ijtihād but does not possess these tools is like a person who claims he can reach the skies without any stairs. After this, it is important that this individual exerts himself in these fields of knowledge and ponders deeply on the evidence from wherein he is capable of deriving rulings. Once he is capable of deriving rulings, it is important he devises principles by which he derives rulings from the evidence, like the principles of Imam Shāfi'ī and the other imams. It is precisely these principles which stop people from understanding the essence of ijtihād, because one does not obtain the skill of ijtihād by merely gaining proficiency in the different fields of knowledge. It is most important to understand that ijtihād is inherent and that one devises the principles upon which he will derive the rulings. Therefore, one cannot claim to be a mujtahid if he is deficient in any field of knowledge or that he is proficient in all the necessary fields of knowledge but does not possess the ability of ijtihād, or that he possesses the cability of ijtihād but does not devise the principles by which to derive rulings from the evidence.

## CLAIM TO IJTIHĀD

Despite his greatness, when Suyuṭī claimed to be a mujtahid the scholars of his time broke ranks with him and challenged him to a debate. He refused and withdrew his claim soon after.

Ibn Ḥajar Makkī writes:

> The contemporary scholars condemned Suyuṭī and prepared a set of juridical cases, each of them containing two opposing opinions of the pious predecessors. This was to determine whether he possessed the lowest level of ijtihād. If he truly was a mujtahid, he would be able to select the more preferred of the two opinions by deriving from the evidences using the principles of the four great imams. Suyūṭī returned the paper unanswered saying he did not have time to answer the questions.

Then, Ibn Ḥajar Makkī comments, "Think of the burden one must bear as a mujtahid, and this was only the lowest level of ijtihād. This shows that whosoever lays claim to even the lowest level of ijtihād, let

> alone independent ijtihād [*ijtihād muṭlaq*][4], is a vain person, mired in self-deception, and his arms and legs are flailing about in the darkness."

Whosoever understands the greatness of the position of independent ijtihād will be ashamed to attribute this to anyone in this time. In fact, Ibn Ṣalāḥ and his followers say the doors of independent ijtihād have been closed for three hundred years.[5] Ibn Ṣalāḥ quotes some scholars of the principles of Dīn as saying that there is no mujtahid after Imam Shāfi'ī. He adds that the scholars disagree as to whether Imam al-Ḥaramain al-Juwainī al-Shāfi'ī and Ghazālī, two eminent scholars, belong in any rank of the mujtahids or not. The scholars state regarding Rāyunī, the author of *al-Baḥr al-Rā'iq*[6], that he was not amongst the mujtahids though he often said, "I can recount the narrations of Imam Shāfi'ī by memory if they are ever lost." When such eminent scholars could not reach the level of itjihād in madhhab, then how can one who can't even understand the writings of these scholars claim a higher level of ijtihād?

سُبْحَانَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَانٌ عَظِيْمٌ

Rāfi'ī is quoted as saying, "It is almost a consensus of the scholars that no mujtahids remain today."

## POSSIBILITY OF MUJTAHIDS IN OUR TIME

This is a lengthy article worth reading. An essay written by Shaikh Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān A'ẓamī [published in the magazine, *al-Dā'ī,* of Deoband at the end of Sha'bān in 1396/1976] summarizes this subject. He says:

> The ijtihād, which many scholars say has gone extinct, refers to independent ijtihād. This is plainly stated by Ibn Ḥajar Makkī and Ibn Ṣalāḥ. In fact, Ibn Ṣalāḥ quotes many scholars on the principles of Dīn saying that there has been no independent mujtahid since Imam Shāfi'ī. Sha'rānī says, "After the four imams, none has laid claim to being an independent mujtahid except for Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, who has been denounced by all."

This is what is known historically. As far as whether it is actually possible for any independent mujtahid to be born after the four imams, Shaʿrānī states, "No doubt, the possibility exists because Allah ﷻ is All-Powerful, and there is no evidence to prove otherwise." Shaikh ʿAbd al-Ḥayy says,

> Whoever says no mujtahid can be born after the four imams is surely mistaken. But if he proclaims that no such person existed who claimed to be a mujtahid and was accepted by the majority of scholars after the four imams, he is absolutely correct.

## ENDNOTES

1 *Mughnī* 11/383

2 *Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn* 1/ 46

3 *Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn* 1/ 46

4 Independent ijtihād refers to the ijtihād in which the mujtahid is not dependent on another in deriving rulings. For example, Imam Abū Ḥanīfa practiced independent ijtihād though his students did not, since they were dependent on his principles to derive rulings from the Qur'an and Sunna.

5 Ibn Ṣalāḥ was a scholar from the $7^{th}$ century C.E. which means that in his view independent ijtihād had ceased from the $4^{th}$ century A.H.

6 Commentary of the Ḥanafī text, *Kanz al-Daqā'iq*

الخامس

# Chapter Five

# Restricting the Mujtahids to Four Imams

## THREE PROOFS OF RESTRICTING TO FOUR IMAMS

*Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī* writes in his book *'Iqd al-Jīd*:

> Know that there are many reasons behind restricting the community to four imams. There are many problems with following anyone besides the four imams and we will prove this with strong evidence. Firstly, the community is unanimous that we must trust the pious predecessors in understanding the Shari'a. This is why the First Successors always trusted the Companions ﷺ just as the Second Successors trusted the First Successors in understanding the Shari'a. Even the rationale supports this arrangement because the Shari'a can only be learned by narration and derivation. Narration can only be authentic when it is acquired from the people who precede us. As for derivation, one is dependent on knowledge of the madhhabs of the earlier scholars; this is so as to avoid splintering from them by holding an opinion that opposes the [scholarly] consensus. Any opinion taken must be based on their opinion and nothing else. To gain knowledge of the earlier scholars every generation must seek help from the generation before it, as is the case with all the arts and sciences, such as Arabic morphology, Arabic syntax, medicine, poetry, blacksmithing,

carpentry, and dyeing. One cannot master any of these until he spends time with an expert in the respective field. Though it is rationally possible for one to be self-trained in any field, it is unlikely to happen.

Now, when it is understood that we must rely on the sayings of the pious predecessors, it is also important that these sayings have an authentic chain of transmission, that they are compiled in reliable books, and that the scholars have annotated these books to clarify one meaning where various meanings may exist. In some places, the general [*ʿāmm*] should be made specific [*khāṣ*] and an indeterminate word [*muṭlaq*] a determinate word [*muqayyad*] and the evidence of the rulings should be derived there from.

The second proof is that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Follow the majority group [*sawād al-aʿẓam*]."[1] Thus, when every madhhab besides the madhhab of the four imams disappeared, following the madhhab of one of the four imams is the majority group [*sawād al-aʿẓam*] and to part from them is to separate from the majority group [*sawād al-aʿẓam*].

The third proof is that a long time has past and trustworthiness in people has disappeared. We certainly cannot depend on the errant scholars. They would attribute false statements towards the pious predecessors whose trustworthiness and truthfulness is known. Since this transmission through the errant scholars is not dependable, we will reject whatever is narrated by them. As for the four madhhabs, it is necessary for us to adhere to them because their madhhabs are organized and systematized; their books are endorsed by the scholars and are dependable. Therefore, no one can attribute anything wrong towards them.[2]

## TAQLĪD TO THE FOUR IMAMS IS INCIDENTAL

Muftī Muḥammad Shafīʿ in his book *Jawāhir al-Fiqh* explains why we follow only four imams and answers the question as to whether there is anything wrong with following any imam. He also addresses the question regarding whether following the four imams is proven to be in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunna. He writes:

Restricting taqlīd to the four imams happened incidentally and was not a legal or rational choice. By the will of Allah ﷻ, every

madhhab besides the four madhhabs disappeared over time and became as if they never existed. Even if ten, thirty, fifty, or hundred rulings from their madhhab are saved, one cannot establish a complete madhhab based on such a small number of rulings. If one decides to follow them in these rulings, then what is to be done in the thousands of other issues where there is no known opinion by them? As every madhhab besides the madhhabs of the four imams disappeared it became clear that following our Dīn would be subject to following one of the four madhhabs. Therefore, Ibn Khaldūn writes in his *Muqaddamat al-Tārīkh* regarding the madhhab of the Literalists [*Ahl al-Ẓāhir*]:

ثُمَّ دَرَسَ مَذْهَبُ اَهْلِ الظَّاهِرِ الْيَوْمَ بِدُرُوْسِ اِئمَّةٍ وَ اِنْكَارِ الْجَمْهُوْرِ عَلَي
مُنْتَحِلِيْهِ وَ لَم يَبْقَ اِلَّا فِي الْكُتُبِ الْجَدِيْدَةِ

Then the madhhab of the Literalists vanished because their imams died out and because the majority [*jamhūr*] rejected their followers and nothing remained of them except their names in the new books.

Ibn Khaldūn adds:

وَوَقَفَ التَّقْلِيْدُ فِي الْاَمْصَار عَنْدَ هَوُلَا الْاَرْبَعَةِ وَدَرَسَ الْمُقَلّدُونَ لِمَنْ
سِوَاهُمْ. . . وَقَدْ صَارَ أَهْلُ الْاَسْلاَمِ الْيَوْمَ عَلَى تَقْلِيدِ هَؤلاَءِ الْاَئمَّةِ الْاَرْبَعَةِ

All the different regions, only following of the four imams is observed while the followers of all other imams have died. When terminologies overwhelmed the sciences, reaching the level of ijtihād became difficult [because of the inability to fulfill its conditions]. When ijtihād was about to come in the hands of inept and untrustworthy people and those who did not possess the good character of Dīn, the scholars declared the door of ijtihād closed. They exhorted people to follow one of the four imams and prohibited them from conjoining madhhabs. The rulings and opinions of other imams, therefore, only survived in the books. Their madhhabs never developed and neither were there any books that preserved all their rulings. Once the principles had been laid out and the chain of transmission to the imam authenticated, every

person took the madhhab of their imam. Then the word fiqh, in that time, became the epitome for following one imam only. The claim to ijtihād, especially in this age, is absolute nonsense and following such a person is unwarranted. The scholars of Islam are now unanimous upon following these four imams.

## ONLY THE FOUR IMAMS WILL BE FOLLOWED

Shaikh Ibn Hammām writes in *al-Fatḥ al-Qadīr*:

اِنْعَقَدَ الْاِجْمَاعُ عَلَي عَدَمِ الْعَمَلِ بِالْمَذَاهِبِ الْمُخَالِفَةِ لِلْأَئِمَّةِ الْاَرْبَعَةِ

The consensus is that none of the madhhabs which compete with the four imams will be followed.

Ibn Ḥajar Makkī writes in *Fatḥ al-Mubīn* [commentary of *al-Arba'īn*]:

امَّا فِي زَمَانِنَا فَقَالَ اِئِمَّتُنَا لَا يَجُوْزُ تَقْلِيْدُ غَيْرِ الْاَئِمَّةِ الْاَرْبَعَةِ الشَّافِعِيِّ وَ مَالِكٍ
وَ اَبِيْ حَنِيْفَةَ وَ اَحْمَدَ بْنِ حَنْبَلَ

And in our time, our scholars say it is not permissible to follow anyone except Imam Shāfi'ī, Imam Mālik, Imam Abū Ḥanīfa, and Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal.

Now, for someone to ask for proof as to why taqlīd is restricted to four imams is feeblemindedness. This is like the example of a father who had eight children of which four died in his life and four remained after his death. It is understood that any inheritance the father leaves behind will be distributed amongst the four children only, and the four children who died before the father will not receive any share of the inheritance. Of course, this is not a denial of their existence at some point in the past. In this case, you will never hear a person ask why the inheritance is being distributed amongst the four sons only and why the deceased children are not getting their share. But if anyone did ask, we would say that this is how fate had it.

Mulla Jīvan wrote in his *Tafsīr al-Aḥmadī:*

وَالْاِنْصَافُ اَنَّ اِنْحِصَارَ الْمَذَاهِبِ فِي الْاَرْبِعِ فُضْلُ اِلٰهِيٌّ وَ قُبُوْلِيَةٌ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللهِ تَعَالَي لَا مَجَالَ فِيْهَا لِلتَوْجِيْهَاتِ وَالْاَدِلَّةِ

> The truth is that the restriction to four imams is nothing but the grace of Allah ﷻ and a sign of His acceptance of the four imams. There is no place for evidence and reasoning in this matter.

## ENDNOTES

1 Musnad Aḥmad, 30/392, 32/157

2 Iqd al-Jīd, p. 14

السادس

# Chapter Six

# Taqlīd

## THE REALITY OF TAQLĪD

*When the doors* of ijtihād closed and every madhhab ceded to the madhhabs of the four imams, taqlīd of the four madhhabs became incumbent upon the community. Those who say taqlīd is polytheism [*shirk*] do not understand the meaning of taqlīd. Taqlīd is not independent of the Sunna of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. It is nothing more than acceptance of all the rulings the mujtahids derived from the Qur'an, the aḥādīth, and the sayings of the Companions ﷺ. This is because the definition of taqlīd is given as:

> When one who does not possess the ability of ijtihād accepts the derivative juristic rulings of a mujtahid; he does not ask for proof and trusts that the mujtahid possesses the proof to support his ruling.

In *Abū Dāwūd*, Jābir ﷺ narrates:

> "Once we went on a journey. A stone hit and injured one of the men on the head. Shortly after, he became impure by major ritual impurity [*janāba*] and had to take a bath. He asked his friends, 'Am I allowed to perform dry ablution [*tayammum*]?' They replied, 'No, not when water is available.' He then took a bath and died shortly

> thereafter. After they returned, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ was informed of the incident. He said, "They killed him, may Allah ﷻ kill them. When they did not know the ruling why didn't they ask a scholar; asking is the cure for an incompetent person."[1]

These people derived their opinion from the explicit meaning of the aya, 'and you did not find water,'[2] but as mentioned previously, there are many conditions for ijtihād. This is why Shaikh al-Islam Ibn Taimiyya says in his fatwa:

> The opinion of the majority of the community is that ijtihād and taqlīd are both permissible: ijtihād for one who has the ability to do so and taqlīd for the one incapable of it.[3]

In another place, he writes:

> It is permissible for a person to follow a specific imam when he is unable to gather information about the Shari'a from any other source. Though, if he can gain knowledge of the Shari'a through other means, he is not then obligated to follow the madhhab of that imam.

Abū al-Walīd Bājī Mālikī, commentator of the *Muwaṭṭa'* writes in *Kitāb al-Ḥudūd fi al Uṣūl*:[4]

> Taqlīd means to accept the one you are following without asking for proof though you may already know it. This is obligatory upon a person who is incapable of ijtihād.

Shaikh Gangohī writes in one of his letters[5] which Mufti Shafī' reproduced in his book *Jawāhir al-Fiqh*:

> You say: taqlīd of a specific imam is an evil innovation [*al-bid'at al-sayyi'a*].
>
> I say: According to you, taqlīd of a specific imam is permissible and you have admitted to this yourself. The only problem is you do not understand the meaning of 'permissibility.' Listen for a minute, you

should know that you have just rejected the textual and rational evidences of taqlīd [by pronouncing that taqlīd of a specific imam is an evil innovation]. Taqlīd itself is mandated by the aya:

فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

*So, ask the people* [*having the knowledge*] *of the message if you do not know.*[6]

And the hadith:

إِنَّمَا شِفَاءُ الْعِيِّ السُّؤَالُ

Verily the cure of an incompetent [who does not possess the necessary means, skill or know-how] person is in asking.[7]

It is also understood that Dīn cannot be attained without learning; it is not something acquired by the senses or the intellect. Therefore, absolute taqlīd [*taqlīd muṭlaq*] is itself mandatory [for one who does not possess the ability of ijtihād]. Surely, you will accept this much but if you don't, than I shall prove it in another way:

Absolute taqlīd is of two kinds:

1 Restricted taqlīd [to a specific imam]
2 Unrestricted taqlīd

Both these two originate from the same root of absolute taqlīd regardless of how you put it. You may call it a root and its two branches, an absolute and its two particulars, or a whole and its two parts; put it anyway you want it. Anyhow, both of these two particulars are subordinate to absolute taqlīd, which is mandatory. Now I ask you, how a part [or branch] of a whole [or root] which is mandatory can itself be permissible. O servant of Allah ﷻ! Mandatory and allowable [*mubāḥ*] are two opposite branches from the root of command [*ḥukm*]. Then, how can the branch of allowable simultaneously be a branch of its opposite [mandatory]. Think for a minute, absolute taqlīd is mandatory and restricted taqlīd allowable, though restricted taqlīd is a part of absolute taqlīd. The discrepancy in your thinking is

based on this one misunderstanding. Now use your head. Both types of taqlīd are mandatory. There is no allowable except in the option of choosing between restricted and unrestricted taqlīd. If you take one you have no need for the other but if you leave both you are sinful. The option of choosing between one of the two is metaphorically called allowable, not that restricted taqlīd itself is allowable. The example of this is like expiation for one who breaks his oath [*ḥalaf*]. Expiation for breaking the oath is itself mandatory, but one is permitted to expiate by feeding the poor, clothing them or freeing a slave. It is permitted for him to do any one of the three, but to refuse all of them is a sin. Likewise is the case with all the general principles of the Shari'a. Everything the Shari'a regulates as a general order is mandatory. The permissibility is only in choosing the option between one of its many parts. It is not the contradiction you assumed by declaring restricted taqlīd as allowable when it is actually mandatory. If this is the case, then by the same token that restricted taqlīd is at the most allowable in your opinion, those who say restricted taqlīd is mandatory will respond that unrestricted taqlīd should be an evil innovation. This is because unrestricted taqlīd is in the same meaning as restricted taqlīd in being allowable since they both are branches of the same root [i.e., if restricted taqlīd is an innovation in your opinion, then why would it be wrong for them to assert that unrestricted taqlīd is also an innovation since both restricted and unrestricted taqlīd are branches of the same root].

## A LETTER BY SHAIKH QĀSIM

The letter is lengthy but worth reading. Mufti Shafī' reproduced a letter of Shaikh Qāsim Nānautwī, who wrote:

Listen to this important point on taqlīd. Undoubtedly, there is only one Dīn, and that is the Dīn of Islam, and all the four madhhabs are on truth [*ḥaqq*].

Ayurveda and modern medicine are essentially the same. The ayurvedic diagnoses and prescribes medicines like the modern physician but at the time of sickness, the only one whose treatment is taken is the one who is caring for the patient. Nobody will take the opinion of the other, be it the ayurvedic or the physician. Likewise,

in common issues or otherwise when there is disagreement between the madhhabs, the muqallid will follow his imam whoever it may be. Yes, it sometimes happens that we leave one physician for another, but even then we only take the medicine prescribed by the new physician. Likewise, it happened in the past that some of our pious predecessors left their madhhab for whatever reason and began following another. Once they changed their madhhab, they stuck with it. They never combined different opinions from different madhhabs as if making their own fifth madhhab. Imam Ṭaḥāwī, an eminent jurist and hadith master, was previously Shāfi'ī but later chose the Ḥanafī madhhab. However, there is no way out without taqlīd. This is why millions of hadith masters and other scholars were muqallid. Take the example of Imam Tirmidhī, who was a great scholar, jurist, and hadith master. He is also the author of the renowned hadith collection, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* but was still a muqallid, and if you do not believe me study his hadith book, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*. When such scholars were muqallid [Imam Tirmidhī was a muqallid of Imam Shāfi'ī; Imam Abū Yūsuf and Imam Muḥammad were muqallid of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa] then which scholar of our time can be free of taqlīd? And what difference does it make if one of the previous scholars did not do taqlīd of one of the imams? Who looks at one or two people when millions are doing it? If you ask anyone with any understanding, you will be told that the true way is to follow the way that has been established from the time of the pious predecessors in our community. Furthermore, it would be foolish of us to straddle between madhhabs only because a few scholars did so in the past. It is like the example of a sick and ignorant person observing a physician diagnosing and treating himself and suddenly he feels he should do the same. After all, if the physician can do it why can't he and thus save himself a trip to the doctor? Would you call this person smart or foolish? Similarly, if an ignoramus rejects taqlīd on the basis that some scholar in the past did his own ijtihād, would you not say, regardless of whether he truly possesses knowledge or not, that he has no common sense in matters of Dīn? And forget the ignorant ones, believe me, even most of the scholars of today are completely ignorant. In fact, some of these scholars are more ignorant than the ignorant. With two Urdu books under their arms, they go around giving speeches without possessing an iota of knowledge. Knowledge of Dīn is when one can teach any subject of Dīn to the seekers of knowledge.[8]

## CONFESSION OF A SALAFĪ SCHOLAR

Amongst many of the letters of Shaikh Ḥussain Aḥmad Madanī[9] is a long letter written in response to the former head of al-Jamā'‘t al-Islāmī in India, Abū al-Laith. He writes:

> Shaikh Muḥammad Ḥussain Batālwī was one of the fieriest leaders of the Salafī group. He was bitterly opposed to taqlīd and was one of the foremost propagators of the Salafī movement in India at the time. He [Shaikh Batālwī] writes in his magazine *Ishā‘at al-Sunna* [v.2: p. 20, 51-53]:
>
>> 'After fifty-three years of experience, I have learned this much: those who ignorantly renounce following an independent mujtahid and belief in absolute taqlīd eventually say farewell [*salām*] to Islam. Some of them convert to Christianity while others renounce all religions and become independent of any religion or belief. The lowest level of this renunciation is rejection of and deviation from the rulings of Shari‘a; some of these heretics go as far to reject the Jumu‘a ṣalāt, congregational ṣalāt, ṣalāt, and fasting. They do not abstain from alcohol and usury. Some of them avoid open confrontation with the Dīn for worldly reasons but are engaged in it quietly. They entrap women, wedding them illegitimately; and usurp people's wealth through impermissible means; hold up the wealth owed to Allah ﷻ; and violate His rights. There are other ways of inviting disbelief, apostasy, and heresy, but the most effective way of destroying the Dīn of the people who are ignorant of Dīn, is rejection of taqlīd.'

## DISCOURSE BETWEEN SHAIKH QĀSIM AND A SALAFĪ SCHOLAR

This excerpt of Shaikh Muḥammad Ḥussain Batālwī's words taken by Shaikh Ḥussain Aḥmad Madanī shows what Shaikh learned after many years of experience. In another book, *Sawāniḥ-e-Qāsimī,* there is another incident about him. Shaikh Muḥammad Ḥussain Batālwī wrote a letter

to Shaikh Qāsim Nānautwī saying, "I need to talk to you privately about some important matters, but under the condition that none of your students will be with you when we talk." Shaikh Nānautwī accepted and replied, "Please do come." Thereafter, Shaikh Batālwī came to Shaikh Nānautwī, the door of the room was closed, and the conversation began.

Shaikh Nānautwī said to Shaikh Batālwī, "Whatever you say, be aware of two things. First, you will narrate the ruling of the Ḥanafī madhhab while I am responsible for presenting the evidences. Second, I am a muqallid of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa; any objection you raise must be based on a ruling of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa, not something written in *Shāmī*[10] or by the author of *al-Durr al-Mukhtār* that he said such and such thing because I am not their muqallid."

Thereafter, many controversial issues of raising the hands after bowing [*ruku'*], reciting Sūrat al-Fātiḥa behind the imam, saying *āmīn* out loud, and other such issues were discussed. As per instruction, Shaikh Batālwī narrated the ruling of the Ḥanafī madhhab on the issue while Shaikh Nānautwī presented evidence from the Qur'an and Sunna. During the talk, whenever Shaikh Nānautwī presented his arguments and evidences, Shaikh Batālwī would become ecstatic, frequently crying out, 'Allah ﷻ be praised, Allah ﷻ be praised,' and almost stood up in amazement. When the talk was over, he said, "I am amazed that a person like yourself and then a muqallid!" (i.e. with all this knowledge, insight, and ability to derive from the Qur'an and Sunna how can you be a muqallid?) Shaikh Nānautwī replied, "And I am amazed that a person like yourself can be a Salafī." I also heard this same incident from some elders. They said that at the end of their talk, Shaikh Nānautwī said to Shaikh Batālwī, "Your saying what you said about me while I am a muqallid is reasonable proof of the importance of taqlīd."

## AN ANECDOTE

One of my classmates, who graduated from Maẓāhir al-'Ulūm,[11] was later employed as a librarian in the school library but left because of the low salary. He went to work in Aligarh [India] for a Ph.D doctor who was a Salafī. He sent me a letter three or four days after being hired, explaining how he was enjoying it in Aligarh and that the salary was decent. He also said, "He [the doctor] is very good; he loves me and always invites me for

dinner. Since I have arrived though, I have gotten myself stuck in a predicament. When he prays and rises from after bowing, he raises his hands and keeps them frozen in that position until he is in prostration [*sajda*]. He never falls on his face because he is used to it, but when I do the same thing I fall on my face. When I tell him that Shaikh Thanā Allāh ﷺ Pānīpatī and Shaikh Naẓīr Ḥussain [known Salafī scholars] wrote in their fatwas that one should drop his hands after raising the hands he exclaims, 'Am I a muqallid of Shaikh Naẓīr and Shaikh Pānīpatī? If I wanted to do taqlīd why shouldn't I just follow Imam Abū Ḥanīfa who was greater in his knowledge, his deeds, and his taqwā than them?' Could you kindly send me a hadith that proves that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ dropped his hands immediately after he raised them before he prostrated? I am in a very difficult position."

At the time, I was teaching a session on aḥādīth. I don't have the letter at the moment, nor do I remember the whole incident, but I do remember sending some aḥādīth by Abū Ḥumaid al-Saʿdī ﷺ from *Bukhārī*. In the hadith, the Companion ﷺ describes the Blessed Prophet ﷺ:

فَإِذَا رَفَعَ رَاسَهُ اِسْتَوَي حَتيَّ يَعُوْدَ كُلُّ فَقَارٍ مَكَانَهُ

As he stood up, he would relax until every limb was in its proper place.[12]

This can only be true if the Blessed Prophet ﷺ dropped his hands after raising them.

## ENDNOTES

1 Abū Dāwūd, *fi al-Majrūḥ Yatayammam*

2 5:6

3 *Fatāwā Ibn Taimiyya*, 20/203

4 *Kitāb al-Ḥudūd fi al-Uṣūl*, p. 64

5 This letter was written in response to someone who wrote to him about the matter of taqlīd. He agreed that absolute taqlīd was obligatory but declared that taqlīd of a specific imam [*taqlīd al-shakhs*] was an innovation and if anything, permissible only.

6 21:7

7 Baihaqī 1/227 | Dare Quṭnī 1/189 | Abū Dāwūd *fī al-Majrūh Yatayammam*

8 *Jawāhir al-Fiqh*, 1/135

9 Makātīb Shaikh Ḥussain Madanī, p. 416

10 An appellation for the Ḥanafī text, *Radd al-Mukhtār*

11 Reknowned traditional Islamic school in Sahāranpūr, India

12 Bukhārī, *Sunnat al-Julūs fi al-Tashahhud*

السَّابِع

Chapter Seven

# Taqlīd of the Greatest Imam, Imam Abū Ḥanīfa

## THE MADHHAB OF IMAM ABŪ ḤANĪFA

*The madhhab* of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa, which is the most prevalent madhhab in the Indian subcontinent, spread through the first Muslim conquerors who were Ḥanafīs. Thus, the Ḥanafī madhhab spread with the spread of Islam in the subcontinent. There are many other reasons why the Ḥanafī madhhab flourished in the subcontinent, as I have mentioned in the introduction to my book, *Aujaz al-Masālik*. One of the reasons was that, of all the imams, the period of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa was closest to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. He lived in the same century as the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and was born in 80 A.H.

In *Bukhārī*, the three-person transmission [*thulāthiyāt*] aḥādīth are the most authentic aḥādīth and many books have been authored on them. A three-person transmission hadith is a hadith in which the chain consists of three people between the hadith master [e.g., Imam Bukhārī] and the Blessed Prophet ﷺ: the first being the teacher of the hadith master then a First Successor, and lastly a Companion رضي الله عنه. According to the Ḥanafīs, Imam Abū Ḥanīfa was a First Successor therefore only a Companion رضي الله عنه came in between him and the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, and the maxim about the Companions رضي الله عنهم is: *al-Ṣaḥāba Kulluhum ʿUdūl* [all the Companions رضي الله عنهم were righteous]. Those who take Imam Abū Ḥanīfa as a First Successor say

the Ḥanafī madhhab is a two-chain transmission [*thanā'ī*], the first one being a Companion ﷺ, the second a First Successor who is also the teacher of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa; and a student is more informed of his teacher than anyone else. Therefore, to accuse the Ḥanafī madhhab of weakness is a fair sign of incompetence in the science of hadith. One cannot fault narrations in evidence of the Ḥanafī madhhab if a weak narrator is found in the third or fourth link down the chain of transmission. For this reason Ibn Taimiyya writes in his fatwas:[1]

> The imams who came before the collection of hadith books knew the Sunna of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ more than the later scholars. This was because many of the aḥādīth, which reached them and were authentic in their opinion, often times reached us with a broken chain or through an unknown narrator. At that time, their hearts carried a larger number of aḥādīth and sciences than are found in the books of aḥādīth.

Another notable point is that Imam Bukhārī compiled twenty-three three-person transmission aḥādīth. Twenty of them consist of students or students of the students of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa. Eleven are by Makkī ibn Ibrāhīm who was a student of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa. It is known that once he narrated a hadith saying, "Abū Ḥanīfa narrated to us." Someone from the crowd shouted, "We don't want to hear the hadith of Abū Ḥanīfa, narrate the hadith of Ibn Juraij." He replied, "I do not narrate my aḥādīth to idiots and it is unlawful upon you to write any of my narrations." After this, he refused to narrate another hadith until the objector was expelled from the gathering.

Six aḥādīth are by Abū 'Āsim al-Nabīl Ḍaḥḥāq ibn Mukhlid who also was a student of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa. Three aḥādīth are by Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī who was a student of Imam Ẓufr and Imam Abū Yūsuf. Two narrators remain. I was not able to determine whether they were students of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa or not.

It is narrated in the introduction of *Aujaz* that Sha'rānī said that whatever aḥādīth Imam Abū Ḥanīfa brought in support of his madhhab were taken from the greatest First Successors of his time. It is unimaginable for anyone of them to be suspected of forging aḥādīth and if someone finds weakness in the evidence of the Ḥanafī madhhab, it is because of weakness in the narrators after them. Therefore, the weakness has no effect on the narrations which Imam Abū Ḥanīfa chose in support of his madhhab.

In *Aujaz*, we explained the madhhab of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa in detail. In the ninth note it was explained that the madhhab of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa was based on strong principles. The following article is taken from the work of Ibn Ḥajar al-Shāfi'ī. He said:

> It is essential that you are not deceived regarding the term scholars sometimes use about Imam Abū Ḥanīfa and his companions being 'the followers of opinion' [*Aṣḥāb al-Ra'y*]. Do not be deceived into thinking that Imam Abū Ḥanīfa favored his own opinion over the Sunna or sayings of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ because he has been exculpated from any such accusation. This is because it is understood from different sources that Imam Abū Ḥanīfa first took from the Qur'an and then looked in the aḥādīth. And when nothing was to be found in the Sunna of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ he looked in the sayings of the Companions ﵃. If the Companions ﵃ disagreed on an issue he took the opinion closest to the Qur'an and Sunna, and never ignored the sayings of the Companions ﵃. When an answer was not to be found in the sayings of the Companions ﵃, he did his own ijtihād. He resorted to ijtihād in the end and, like other First Successors of his time, did not take the opinion of his contemporaries.

Imam 'Abd Allāh ibn Mubārak narrated that Imam Abū Ḥanīfa said:

> We take a hadith if it is available, otherwise the sayings of the Companions ﵃, but never beyond that. If we find the opinions of the First Successors, then I will compete with them [in deriving rulings].

It is also narrated that he said, "It is surprising that people say my fatwa is a product of my own opinion though I derive my fatwas from the aḥādīth."

He also said:

> It is not permissible for anyone to say anything from his own opinion when a ruling is to be found in the Qur'an; and the same is true of the aḥādīth. Likewise, it is not permissible to form a different opinion when the Companions ﵃ agreed on any issue. It is only when the Companions ﵃ disagreed that we will choose from their opinions whichever is closer to the Qur'an and Sunna.

Somebody once said to Imam Abū Ḥanīfa, “Stop using analogical deduction, Satan was the first to rationalize!” Imam Abū Ḥanīfa turned to him and said, “O so-and-so, your argument is irrational because Satan rationalized to reject the order of Allah ﷻ and became a disbeliever, whereas my rationalization is to follow the commandments of Allah ﷻ. This is because my analogical deduction is based on the Qur’an, the Sunna of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, the Companions رضي الله عنهم and their First Successors. Thus, we are adherents of the Qur’an and Sunna, how then can we be equal to the accursed Satan?”

The man replied, “I was mistaken, I repent to Allah ﷻ. May Allah ﷻ enlighten your heart as you enlightened mine.”

## MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ḤANAFĪ MADHHAB

Ibn Ḥajar Makkī said:

> The accusation against the Ḥanafīs that they oppose the authentic aḥādīth of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ without any proof is because the accusers did not research the principles of the Ḥanafī madhhab.

He elaborated on the principles of the Ḥanafī madhhab as has been quoted in the introduction of *Aujaz*, saying:

> One of the many principles of the Ḥanafī madhhab is that a singular chain of transmission narration will not be accepted if it contradicts an agreed upon injunction. Also, a narration will be considered abrogated if the narrator’s [Companion رضي الله عنه] own practice is against it. Likewise, a narration will be rejected if a narrator narrates something out-of-the-ordinary that has not been narrated by any of his contemporaries. Another principle is that a ruling against a criminal will be overturned if a singular chain of transmission narration raises any doubt about the ruling. This is because the Ḥanafīs do not accept doubt [*shubha*] in matters related to criminal law. Another principle is that the singular chain of transmission narration will be considered abrogated if the Companions رضي الله عنهم disagreed upon any issue in which that narration was ignored. Also, a narration with a singular chain of transmission will be rejected if it contradicts the explicit

> meaning of an aya of the Qur'an; this is because the Qur'an is definitive while the singular chain of transmission narration presumptive; and it is mandatory to choose the stronger evidence over the weaker one. Another principle is that the singular chain of transmission narration is rejected if it opposes a known Sunna.

These principles vindicate Imam Abū Ḥanīfa from the false accusations [that he threw out singular chain of transmission narrations without justifiable reason] that arose from the hearts of jealous men and those ignorant of his principles and of the concept of ijtihād. This also clarifies that Imam Abū Ḥanīfa never ignored a hadith until he found evidence stronger than it.

Ibn Ḥazam al-Ẓāhirī says, "All the Ḥanafīs are unanimous that in the madhhab of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa a weak hadith is more preferable to any opinion that is reached thereafter."

It is narrated that Sha'rānī said, "Imam Abū Ḥanīfa was the most God-fearing, the most scholarly, the most pious, the most careful in matters of Dīn, and the furthest of all people from interjecting his own opinion in Dīn. He never decided an issue until he gathered all his companions in one group, and when they all agreed that it fell according to the rules and principles of the Ḥanafī Madhhab, he would say to Imam Abū Yusuf, 'Write this issue in such and such chapter.'"

It has been mentioned in *Aujaz* that whenever an issue was raised before him, he would ask his companions in a gathering, "What aḥādīth do you have in this matter?" When everybody narrated whatever they knew and Imam Abū Ḥanīfa narrated what he knew, he would take the opinion with the most narrations. In the introduction of *Aujaz*, I wrote at length on the various accusations leveled against Imam Abū Ḥanīfa and their answers. The principle of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa that a singular chain of transmission narration should not oppose the explicit meaning of an aya or a known Sunna of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ is actually taken from the words of 'Umar ؓ regarding the divorce of Fāṭima bint Qais ؓ. Fāṭima bint Qais ؓ complained to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ that her husband divorced her. According to Fāṭima bint Qais ؓ, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ ordered that she would neither stay in her former husband's home [*suknā*] nor receive allowance [*nafqa*] from him during her waiting period [*'idda*]. 'Umar ؓ said, "We cannot ignore the injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunna because of one woman. Who knows whether she still remembers or has forgotten what he told her."[2]

According to some narrations, he said, "Maybe she is just conjecturing."[3]

## IF THE HADITH IS AUTHENTIC IT IS MY MADHHAB

This is a famous quote from the four imams which has been narrated with different wordings. Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī in *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, elaborates on this under the chapter of "Raising both the Hands When Standing from Bowing." He narrates a quote from Ibn Daqīq al-'Īd who said, "According to the principles of Imam Shāfi'ī, raising the hands should be desirable," and comments, "As far as the statement that this 'Should be the madhhab of Imam Shāfi'ī because Imam Shāfi'ī said, 'When a hadith is authentic, it is my madhhab' is objectionable."

Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar continues, "The reason for objection is that we can only practice upon this statement of Imam Shāfi'ī when it is known that the hadith did not reach him. But if it did, and he rejected or interpreted it, then we cannot accept it."

Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar spoke the truth.

Imam Mālik narrates the narration of Ibn 'Umar ﵁ in his *Muwaṭṭa'* that when the Blessed Prophet ﷺ raised himself from bowing, he raised his hands, though in Mudawwana,[4] he is famously quoted as saying that according to him raising the hands during ṣalāt is weak except in the opening *takbīr*. He also said, "I do not find raising the hands anywhere else except in the opening *takbīr*." I have expounded this issue in *Aujaz*.

In *Badhl al-Majhūd*,[5] many aḥādīth are narrated about executing a thief who steals repeatedly under the chapter of 'Thief Who Steals Repeatedly,' It is narrated by Ibn Qayyim that Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal was asked, "Why did you reject these aḥādīth?" He replied, "Because of the hadith of 'Uthman ﵁ in which it says that a Muslim can only be executed for three reasons and stealing is not mentioned amongst them."

This subject has been discussed at length in *Badhl al-Majhūd*. The only point I wish to make is that Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal knew of the aḥādīth about 'executing a thief who steals repeatedly,' but did not accept them. In the disagreement regarding the definition of a large body of water, the madhhab of Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal is that anything more than two large clay vessels [*qullatain*-there is variance between Ḥanbalī scholars as to the exact size of these vessels] of water is a large body of water, though Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal authenticates the *b'ir al-buḍā'* hadith [which is contrary to his own madhhab] as mentioned in *al-Mughnī*.[6] Therefore, whatever Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar said about the statement of Imam Shāfi'ī was true.

The Shaikh of Islam, Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Taimiyya, in his booklet *Raf' al-Malām*, narrates ten different reasons why the imams rejected a hadith.

One of them is that the hadith reached the imam, but he did not authenticate it or that he implemented certain conditions for a singular chain of transmission narration which this hadith did not fulfill. Another reason is that he received the hadith, but he interpreted it to remove a contradiction between this and another hadith. After narrating the ten reasons, Ibn Taimiyya says:

> These are the apparent reasons for rejecting a hadith. It is possible the scholar had another reason which we are unaware of because the sea of knowledge is very deep and we cannot grasp all the secrets that are hidden in the hearts of these scholars. Sometimes the scholar may reveal his proof while at other times he may not. Sometimes he reveals it, but sometimes the proof reaches us and at other times it does not. Even when it reaches us sometimes we are able to figure how the evidence was derived while at other times we cannot; and this is regardless of whether the proof is correct or incorrect. This is something that can only be disclosed to one who is erudite in the hadith, as in the four imams. Many authentic and clear aḥādīth reached them, but they rejected them based on strong evidences. There are many authentic narrations on raising the hands [during ṣalāt], but neither the four imams nor the majority of the hadith masters accepted them.

The issue of raising the hands [in ṣalāt] is mentioned in *Aujaz*.

## RESPECT FOR ALL MADHHABS AND IMAMS

One thing that should never be forgotten is that a muqallid of any mujtahid is not allowed to be disrespectful of any hadith master because he opposes the opinion of his own imam. In fact, even the heart should be kept pure about them. Shaikh of Islam, Ibn Taimiyya dedicated a whole booklet, titled *Raf' al-Malām 'an A'immat al-A'lām*, on this matter which is important and worth reading. This booklet is available separately and is also appended to his collection of fatwas. In this booklet, he says:

> It is incumbent upon all Muslims to befriend the pious ones as they do Allah ﷻ and his Blessed Prophet ﷺ since it is the order of Allah ﷻ in the Qur'an. This is especially regarding the scholars of Islam who

> are the inheritors of the prophets of Allah ﷻ and who are like the stars in the sky which guide us in the night when its darkness descends on the land and the seas. The community is unanimous in agreeing upon their insight and their guidance. The scholars of the Muslims are the greatest in the community because they are the successors of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and revivers of the Sunnas of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. The Book of Allah ﷻ is preserved through them and they are nourished by it. It should be understood that none amongst the accepted imams wantonly rejected the aḥādīth of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. This is because they are all unanimous that adherence to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ is obligatory, and that anyone can be accepted or rejected, but none can reject the aḥādīth of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. If the opinion of any scholar contradicts a hadith, there must be a reason behind it.

After this, Ibn Taimiyya narrates ten reasons why the imams did not accept a hadith. He makes it clear that these are only the apparent reasons; there may be many other reasons we have no information about. In this booklet, he specifically rebuts those who are critical of the imams. He also writes that if a mujtahid is mistaken in his ijtihād he receives one reward and his mistake is forgiven but if he is correct, his reward is doubled. If he is not among the people of knowledge and he does ijtihād, he will be sinful. This is like the example of the hadith about the man who received a head injury and asked if he could perform dry ablution. When he was told he must take a bath and he died as a result soon after, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said about them, "They killed him, may Allah ﷻ kill them."

Furthermore, there is a long discourse in the fatwas of Ibn Taimiyya in response to the question, 'Was Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī among the loftiest of the friends of Allah ﷻ and was Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal the greatest of the imams?' This article is also worth reading. In this article, Ibn Taimiyya writes that one who believes that taqlīd of Imam Shāfi'ī is the most virtuous should not criticize those who believe that taqlīd of Imam Mālik is the most virtuous. Likewise, those who believe that taqlīd of Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal is the greatest should not criticize those who believe taqlīd of Imam Shāfi'ī is the greatest. Therefore, it is important for one to be cautious in taqlīd of the imam he believes to be closest to the truth and this also goes for the mujtahid when he follows what he believes to be the closest to the truth. The most important thing is to never follow your lower self [*nafs*] and to never speak on an issue without prior knowledge of it.

Ibn Taimiyya also wrote that those who accuse Imam Abū Ḥanīfa and other imams of deliberately taking analogical deduction over the authentic aḥādīth are displaying animosity towards the imams because they are only speaking from conjecture and their base desires. Take for example Imam Abū Ḥanīfa. They say that on many occasions he inclined towards analogical deduction over authentic hadith. Then, Ibn Taimiyya counters this by narrating many instances of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa taking authentic aḥādīth over analogical deduction.

In *Tadhkirat al-Rashīd*, Shaikh ʿĀshiq Ilāhī Mīratī illustrates the hadith sessions of Shaikh Rashid Aḥmad Gangohī and says Shaikh Gangohī would say, "I have a special place in my heart for the madhhab of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa and am at peace about its being on truth [*haqq*]." Despite this love and affection for the madhhab of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa, it was unthinkable of him to disrespect another madhhab or the imam of another madhhab. If he ever saw any one of his students inclined towards spurning another madhhab, he corrected him both verbally and practically. Even in taqlīd he disliked the rise of sectarianism and discrimination. If he felt some students being biased towards the hadith masters, he changed the course of his speech. When any of the students raised an objection or he heard any of them make a cutting remark [about any of the hadith masters] his look would change and he began narrating the evidences of Imam Bukhārī in place of the evidences of the Ḥanafī madhhab. This was in order to inculcate love and respect in the students for the hadith masters.

In *Āp Bītī*, Shaikh Ashraf ʿAlī Thānwī is quoted from *Ifāḍāt-e-Yaumia* as narrating that once a scholar sat in Shaikh Gangohī's session. After hearing Shaikh's speech, he became zealous and cried out, "Shaikh, in your session even a hadith becomes Ḥanafī. If Imam Shāfiʿī was alive, he would have been silenced." Shaikh became red with anger and said, "What are you saying? You think I would have the courage to say anything if Imam Shāfiʿī was alive? If he was here at this moment I would not dare speak in front of him. In fact, I would become his muqallid and would reject the taqlīd of Imam Abū Ḥanīfa because it is not permissible to follow a deceased mujtahid while another is alive."

I remember too from the elders that Shaikh Gangohī said, "Before Imam Shāfiʿī, my speech is like a childish objection."

## THE TEN PROPRIETIES

During my studies in Maẓāhir al-'Ulūm, classes usually began on a Wednesday. When I started my sessions, I also started on a Wednesday. I began my session with the introduction to knowledge [*muqaddamat al-'ilm*], introduction to the book [*muqaddamat al-kitāb*], and other miscellaneous topics which I continued until the coming Wednesday. At the very end, my last topic of discussion was the basic proprieties [*ādāb*] required of every student during his studies, of which I specifically emphasized the ten basic proprieties. I was young and energetic and as the hadith says,

اَلشَّبَابُ شُعْبَةٌ مِنَ الْجُنُوْنِ

Youth is one branch of insanity.[7]

If I saw any student violating any one of the ten basic proprieties after having been emphasized in the beginning of the year, I quickly got up from my place, slapped him, and returned to my seat. The students who had learned the basic ten proprieties understood why the student was slapped, but a guest or students from another class [who came in large numbers to attend my class] would be confused about what had happened. The students would say, "He probably slept or leaned his elbow on the book." The other proprieties are:

1. Sincerity of intention.
2. Regular attendance in class. One could see my attendance register from those days. None of the students, for many years, had the absent sign after their name.
3. Sitting in a straight line in class; students should sit respectfully in a straight line.
4. To not sleep in class.
5. To not lean on a book.
6. To not miss any hadith. For this reason, absence was a major sin in my class.

One of my habits was that if a hadith contained a profane word [as in the chapter of criminal law] I translated it as it would be in Urdu; the only condition was that no student was allowed to laugh, then I

explained the hadith. From my understanding, my Urdu translation was an exact rendering of what the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and Abū Bakr ؓ had said. Should I consider my own dirty tongue to be better than the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ and Abū Bakr Siddique's ؓ? If they said what they said without any apprehension then who am I to avoid it thinking it bad manners? For example, when words like '*ankutuhā'* and '*umṣuṣ baẓr al-Lāt*' came in the hadith, I translated it but, again, under the condition that no student laughed.

7 Giving full respect to the scholars, i.e. to never object against them; utter disrespectful or derogatory remarks about them; and most importantly to never hold anything in the heart against them. Some people, in their defense of the Ḥanafī madhhab, debase the scholars and some idiots go as far as to criticize the hadith masters. This is something I have no patience for.

8 To not feign respect, but truly carry it in the heart for the teacher, otherwise one will be deprived of knowledge.

9 Do not raise objections against the hadith masters.

I enumerated these briefly. Shāhid has published my lectures on *Bukhārī* which elaborate on the proprieties of the knowledge of Dīn. It is also to be found in *Āp Bītī* in more detail. Another one of the proprieties relates to clothing and appearance. In this particular etiquette, I made sure to emphasize the importance of the beard. Anyone with a trimmed beard could not enter my class and study hadith from me. One of the student who trimmed his beard was registered to attend my hadith classes. I told him I had removed his name from the attendance list of my *Abū Dāwūd* class. In the first exam, his name appeared on every teacher's attendance list except in my *Abū Dāwūd* class. The dean thought it had probably been erased absentmindedly. He called me to ask about it. I happened to be in the exam room at the time. I told him the student's name hadn't been removed forgetfully, but that I had done it because he trimmed his beard. The rule was that teachers were not allowed to remove names from the attendance list, however, the love of my elders for me gave me the freedom to do as I deemed fit. If a student skipped my class I erased his name and told him, "I have erased your name, go to the dean and complain to him. I will talk to him myself." The love and affections of my elders for me had made me audacious. May Allah ﷻ grant all of them the highest rank in Paradise and forgive me for my shortcomings.

A year or two later, I received his letter requesting that, "I want to take bai'a with you." I replied, "You have already experienced what I am like. My elders, Shaikh Thānwī, Shaikh Madanī, and the successors of Shaikh Raipūrī, are better than me and certainly of the highest order. Go and take bai'a on their hands." He then sent another letter saying, "You are the only one who can rectify the heart of a person as hardheaded as me." This article has become more of an autobiography. The point was to mention that in my class debasing the four imams, the hadith masters, and the scholars was unforgivable.

## ENDNOTES

1 *Fatāwā Ibn Taimiyya* 20/239

2 The hadith of Fāṭima bint Qais ﷺ is a singular chain of transmission hadith, and though it is authenticated, it contradicts the explicit injunction of the ayas and other authentic hadith. For this reason, the hadith is rejected.

3 *Badhl al-Majhūd* 3/322

4 One of the original works which compiled the rulings of Imam Mālik.

5 *Badhl al-Majhūd* 5/137

6 *al-Mughnī* 1/25

7 *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaiba*, 8/163 | Maṭālib al-'Aliyya, *Bāb Waṣīyyat al-Nāfi'a*

الثَّامِنُ

# Chapter Eight

# Taṣawwuf

## OBJECTIVE OF TAṢAWWUF IS IḤSĀN

*As previously mentioned,* Jibra'īl ﷺ came to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and asked him, "What is iḥsān?" The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied:

أَنْ تَعْبُدُوا اللهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ

That you worship Allah ﷻ as if you see Him.

Taṣawwuf is another name for iḥsān or, one may say, the acquisition of the attribute of iḥsān. It is also called Taṣawwuf and Sulūk or whatever else you may call it. These are merely different names of the same thing.

My grandfather, Shaikh Muḥammad Ismā'īl Kāndhelwī requested Shaikh Rashid Aḥmad Gangohī, "I need to talk to you in private." When they were alone he said, "I am a [spiritual] student of Shaikh Muḥammad Ya'qūb Dehlawī and a student of Shaikh Muẓaffar Ḥussain Kāndhelwī. They taught me according to the Naqshbandī method. When I applied the method, my six spiritual ethereal points [of the soul] [*al-laṭā'if al-sitta*][1] began turning like a spinning wheel. But I was eager to follow the Sunnas of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and was diligent in reading authentic supplications [*du'ā*] from the aḥādīth e.g. the supplication when entering and exiting the bathroom or going to the bazaar, etc. This is why

I had little interest for the practices devised by the spiritual mentors. I would sometimes meditate for ten or fifteen days, but nothing more. This is my situation and now I am weak and ask that you prescribe for me certain spiritual practices." Shaikh Gangohī said, "Have you achieved iḥsān through your own practices or not?" He replied, "Yes, I have." Shaikh Gangohī replied, "Then you don't need to be prescribed anything because practicing the different practices of the sufis after attaining iḥsān is like reading *Karīma* [i.e., an introductory Persian text] after reading *Gulistān* and *Bostān* [two advanced Persian texts] which is obviously a waste of time. Getting into the practices and exercises of the sufis for you is sinful and a waste of time."[2]

I have heard from my elders and also from Shaikh Gangohī that, "What if one who has memorized the Qur'an said, 'Teach me the Arabic alphabet because I have not read it?'" Shaikh Gangohī says in another place:

> The power of the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ spirituality was such that once a disbeliever recited the testament of faith [*shahāda*] he immediately attained the level of iḥsān. One example of iḥsān in the Companions ﷺ is that they said, 'How can we go to the bathroom and denude ourselves before our Lord?' This was a manifestation of their iḥsān. They were not in need of spiritual exertions [*mujāhadāt*] and exhaustive meditative devotions [*asghāl*] because they had achieved iḥsān by the blessing of the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ company. But their level of iḥsān was much less than the iḥsān of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, and likewise the iḥsān of the First Successors was less than the iḥsān of the Companions ﷺ. Soon enough, the level of iḥsān achieved in the era of the Second Successors became so weak that the spiritual masters were forced to devise exhaustive meditative devotions to revive this aspect of Dīn and prevent its further decline.

For a while, these devotions were no more than means to achieve a noble objective, but as we moved away from the golden era, they became ends unto themselves. As the devotions evolved and were improvised with the times, innovations of different kinds [doctrinal, practical etc.] slowly made their way into this science of Dīn. Though the most eminent spiritual masters destroyed many of these innovations, they were unable to eliminate them entirely. Shaikh specifically took the names of Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī, Shaikh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, Mujaddid Alf-e-Thānī,

and Sayyid Aḥmad Shāhīd as some of the spiritual masters who struggled hard to weed out all the innovations from Taṣawwuf but who were unsuccessful in doing so.

## TAṢAWWUF CREATES LOVE FOR THE SUNNA

Shaikh Gangohī also said, "Allah ﷻ unveiled the path of the Sunna to them." He said:

> One of the blessings of the Sunna is that Satan has little opportunity to deviate those who adhere to the Sunna. It is understood that if a person is strict upon the things the Blessed Prophet emphasized throughout his life e.g. the congregational ṣalāt [*jamā'a*], the obligatory acts [*farāiḍ*], necessary acts [*wājibāt*] and the emphasized Sunnas, Satan cannot inject arrogance in his heart. Such a person will neither begin to exalt himself and think of himself a friend of Allah ﷻ nor will others think he is great and exalted. But if one becomes steadfast on the practices which the Blessed Prophet ﷺ performed occasionally e.g. pre-noon ṣalāt [*ḍuḥā*], post-sunrise ṣalāt [*ishrāq*], or voluntary ṣalāt after Maghrib [*awwābīn*] he then becomes arrogant and people also begin to think something of him.

During this speech Shaikh Gangohī also said, "The Blessed Prophet ﷺ specified iḥsān as the sole objective [of Taṣawwuf] while the sufis take spiritual absorption [*istighrāq*] as its final objective."

Note what Shaikh Thānwī writes in the footnote of *Arwāḥe-e-Thalātha*:

> 'Imam Bukhārī narrated in *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* from Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ that people were ashamed of exposing the area of the body which one is obligated to cover [*satr*] even in private and when going to their women. At that time, the aya was revealed, '*Beware when they cover up themselves with their clothes, He knows what they hide and what they expose*.'[3] Instead, the sufis* [are not ashamed] …
>
> *Footnote: I [Shaikh Thānwī] say: this is a reference only to the *ignorant* sufis.'

## THE LETTERS OF SHAIKH AḤMAD SARHINDĪ[4]

I have written in the beginning that Taṣawwuf and iḥsān were one and the same thing in the opinion of my elders and that iḥsān is one essential aspect of the divine Shari'a. This topic is covered extensively in the writings of the elders.

Shaikh Mujaddid also emphasized this in his letters. I have also published three of his letters. The first letter is lengthy which is addressed to the sons of his spiritual mentor, Shaikh Khawāja Bāqī Billa. It is worth reading. He writes:

> Attainment of purification is based on the fulfillment of good deeds that achieve the pleasure of Allah ﷻ which also rests on the sending of prophets. Therefore, without the sending of prophets, true purification is not attainable; and the purification which the disbelievers and wretched people achieve is not really purification of the heart but purification of the lower self. One who achieves purification of the lower self is destroyed and deviated. The clairvoyance [*kashf*] which some of the disbelievers and wretched people see after attaining purification of the lower self are delusions [*istidrāj*].

After writing on the importance of rectifying the beliefs, he says:

> After rectification of beliefs, one must learn the rules of fiqh. It is also important to learn the necessary acts, the obligatory acts, the lawful [*ḥalāl*] and unlawful, the Sunna, the desirable [*mandūb*], the questionable [*mushtaba*], and undesirable [*makrūh*], and to practice the Dīn according to the requirements of fiqh. Once one has acquired the two branches of beliefs and fiqh then, if Allah ﷻ permits, there is also the path of the sufis.
>
> Sulūk is not independent of fiqh and beliefs. It is to establish a certainty of heart and firmness of belief that protects one against doubtfulness when he is put in doubt and which protects against the destruction of faith if one becomes doubtful of his belief. Another benefit of Sulūk is that it puts ease in performing good deeds, and eliminates lassitude and rebelliousness which stem from the lower self that incites to evil. It is not of the objectives of this path that different celestial forms and shapes of the unseen appear before him

> or so that illuminations [*anwār*] and colors [*alwān*] become [spiritually] perceptible. They are only diversions and foolery of the material world. In fact, if one performs meditative devotions to attain such things, he puts himself in severe danger; and this is because these visions, openings into the unseen, and lights are like us: only creations. They do nothing more than prove [as all creation does] the existence of Allah ﷻ.

I said in the very beginning that the first thing Jibra'īl عليه السلام taught was faith [i.e. beliefs], then Islam [i.e. deeds], and then iḥsān [i.e. Sulūk]. Shaikh Mujaddid mentions these three in the same order in his aforementioned letter.

In letter thirty-six, he writes:

> The Shariʿa guarantees success of the material world and the Hereafter, and Taṣawwuf is a vehicle of this Shariʿa.

He also says:

> The Shariʿa is made up of three integrals: knowledge, deeds, and sincerity [*ikhlāṣ*]. Until these three are not established [in the life of a Muslim] the Shariʿa is not established. Once the Shariʿa is established, the pleasure of Allah ﷻ is guaranteed. This pleasure of Allah ﷻ is superlative and above and beyond the successes of the material world and the Hereafter.
>
> وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ
>
> *And Allah's ﷻ pleasure is above all.*[5]
>
> Thus, the Shariʿa guarantees success of the material world and the Hereafter. Now [we know] that there is no objective higher than adherence to the Shariʿa and that one should not depend on anything else [to achieve salvation]. The sufis excel in Taṣawwuf and ḥaqīqa; they perform the completion of the third branch of sincerity. The purpose of the completion of this branch is for no other purpose than to achieve completion of the Shariʿa. It is not for the purpose of

> temporal spiritual states [*aḥwāl*] and gnosis of Allah ﷻ which the sufis often acquire during their journey on this path. In fact, these two things are like the feelings beginners experience when they start their journey on the path of Taṣawwuf. It is important to ignore all these things and move on to where one attains the pleasure of Allah ﷻ because attainment of the pleasure of Allah ﷻ is where the journey of Sulūk and *jadhb* culminates. This is because the purpose of covering the different steps of Taṣawwuf is to achieve total sincerity and nothing else, and attaining the pleasure of Allah ﷻ is intrinsic to sincerity.
>
> Of the thousands of seekers, few are actually taken through visions and spiritual manifestations before they reach the wealth of sincerity and the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. Shortsighted people take the temporal spiritual states as objectives and the attainment of spiritual manifestations and clairvoyance as worthy causes. Such people are imprisoned in their superstitions and are deprived of practice upon the entire Shari'a. Though, this much is true that these temporal states, the celestial knowledge and the gnosis of Allah ﷻ, are interwoven with the acquisition of sincerity and the attainment of the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. In this way, they [temporal states, celestial knowledge, and gnosis of Allah ﷻ] are passages to the attainment of the true objective.

This reality and the status which the Shari'a is most deserving of became transparent to me [Shaikh al-Hadith Muḥammud Zakariyyā], by the blessings of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, after ten years in this path.

Though I was never overwhelmed by temporal and ecstatic states [*mawājid*], and I never thought much of anything besides attainment of the Shari'a, the truth [of the above reality that clairvoyances and spiritual states are not the objective—the only objective is practicing upon the Shari'a] became manifest to me after ten years.

I am grateful to Allah ﷻ that my response to Shaikh Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān's [leader of the Aḥrār party][6] question[7] about the reality of Taṣawwuf was the same, that: Taṣawwuf is rectification of the intention [*niyya*] as has already been mentioned in detail in *Āp Bītī*.[8] Many other incidents of this kind have also been narrated in *Āp Bītī*.

Khawāja Muḥammad Ma'sūm [son of Mujadid Alf-e-Thānī] in his letters also emphasized the importance of making the sole objective, achievement of the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. In letter sixty, he writes,

> Achievement of friendship with Allah ﷻ [*wilāya*][9] is by adherence to the Shari'a while achievement of the highest level in the path of prophethood is by adherence to the essence of the Shari'a. Thus, there is no concept of friendship with Allah ﷻ and achievement of the highest level in the path of prophethood outside the realm of Shari'a.

In letter # 11, he writes:

> After rectification of the beliefs, adherence to the correct opinion [derived from the Qur'an and Sunna] is extremely important. Furthermore, there is no shortcut from performing the obligatory and necessary acts and preventing oneself from the unlawful acts. Islam is based on five pillars. If any one of these five pillars is demolished, the house of Dīn will become weak and insecure. After rectification of the beliefs and practice of Dīn, it is also necessary to traverse the path of the sufis in order to gain gnosis of the truth and to be saved from the harmfulness of the prurient desires of the lower self. I don't understand how a person can live who is deprived of the gnosis of Allah ﷻ and is incognizant of Him, and how he endears himself to [material] things.

In another letter, he writes:

> Brother Mulla Ḥasan has a question he wants addressed about something I wrote in my letter to 'Ubaid Allāh Baig. His question is that the Shari'a defines right from wrong; therefore, he remembers reading somewhere that Taṣawwuf is about goodwill with everyone, whereas the Shari'a is dislike of the enemy and friendship toward the friend. What a despicable question. Since when is there a difference between the Shari'a and Taṣawwuf and since when were they counterparts? The Shari'a is founded on divine revelation, there is neither doubt nor any adulteration in its laws and it will remain as such until the Day of Judgment.
>
> Everyone is obligated to follow the Shari'a, be it majority or minority. Taṣawwuf does not have the audacity to abrogate the laws of the Shari'a and free its followers from following them. One of the most firm beliefs of the Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamā'a is that no one,

while conscious and sober, can reach a level that frees him from adherence to the commandments of the Shari'a. Whoever believes any different has left the fold of Islam. [A person] Befriending one who is a known enemy of Allah ﷻ and who is subject to the harshest ruling of the Shari'a, has left the folds of Islam. Befriending the enemies of Allah ﷻ and then claiming love for Allah ﷻ and his Blessed Prophet ﷺ are contrary to each other because adherence to the beloved and befriending the friends of the beloved while hatred towards the enemies of the beloved are the requirements of love. This much can be said that on occasion something may appear amongst the spiritual students that opposes the Qur'an and Sunna. At that time, the seeker should not break off from the Shari'a, but rather hold to it even stronger. He should do taqlīd of the imams and adhere to their practices and beliefs while ignoring his own intuition [*wijdān*] and clairvoyances. Sometimes, the worthless ones of the path of Sulūk declare, 'Surely, I am Allah ﷻ.' Such deviants misguide the naive seeker from the loftiest objectives towards worship of themselves. At this time, it is necessary for the true seeker to declare as Ibrahim عليه السلام did when he said, 'I like not those that disappear.' He should race through the savannah of the unseen [i.e. do not get preoccupied with his clairvoyances, the spiritual manifestations, celestial shapes and colors, etc.] towards the Creator in spirit of the aya:

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

*I have, indeed, turned my face straight towards the One who created the heavens and the earth, and I am not one of those who associate partners with Allah ﷻ.*[10]

He should follow the Blessed Prophet ﷺ completely so that he is not deviated by the vagaries of creation.[11]

In this letter, Shaikh Khawāja is pointing to an incident that is mentioned in *Āp Bītī* with reference from Shaikh Qāsim Nānautwī in the book *Arwāḥ-e-Thalātha.* There was a famous spiritual mentor by the name of Khawāja Aḥmad Jām whose every supplication was accepted [*mustajāb*

*al-da'wāt*]. One woman brought her blind child to him and said, "Wipe your hands over his face and repair his sight." At the time, he was overwhelmed by the state of servitude to Allah ﷻ [*'ubūdiyya*]. He humbly said, "I cannot do such a thing." She insisted but he again declined. This went on three or four times until when he saw that she wouldn't listen, he stood up and left saying, "This was the miracle of Īsā ﷺ; he cured the blind and healed the lepers. I can do no such thing." He had not walked far when he received a divine inspiration [*ilhām*] that, "Who are you, who is Īsā ﷺ and who is Mūsā ﷺ! Go back and wipe your hand over his face. You cannot cure, nor can Īsā ﷺ, *mā mī kunaim* (We do it)." He began uttering the words '*mā mī kunaim, mā mī kunaim*' repeatedly. He wiped his hand over the child's face and his blindness was repaired.

After narrating this incident, Shaikh Nānautwī said, "Stupid people think it was his words though it was actually the words of Allah ﷻ. When the poet sings a couplet, the listener hymns it in delight. Likewise, the words of Allah ﷻ '*mā mī kunaim'* put him in a spiritual state of ecstasy and he repeated it over and over again [in delight]."

Shaikh Thānwī writes in the footnote of Shaikh Qāsim Nānautwī's comment, "It was the words of Allah ﷻ," "I say, this is the best explanation of Manṣūr Ḥallāj's[12] declaration, '*Ana al-Ḥaqq,*' [I am *Ḥaqq*]."[13]

The purpose of writing all of the aforementioned is that a person should only be concerned with himself. One should not criticize others and find faults in them, especially in the pious elders, scholars, and spiritual masters. One should not be critical about their actions and statements. None is to be followed in anything against the Shari'a, but at the same time we are not responsible for their actions and utterances.[14]

## TAṢAWWUF IS ADHERENCE TO THE SUNNA AND SHARI'A

In another letter, Shaikh Khawāja writes:

> One should strive vigorously to fulfill the commandments of the Shari'a. He should make enjoining the good and forbidding the evil his habit and nature. He should think it an exalted mission to revive the extinct Sunnas of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and make a concerted

effort to suppress the descent of every spiritual meaning [wārid] after it descends into his heart. He should not rely on dreams and things seen during spiritually heightened states. Nothing happens from seeing oneself a king or the hierarch [*quṭb*] of the sufis of his time in his dream. A true hierarch of the sufis or king is one who is in reality a king or a hierarch of the sufis. And even if one becomes a king and this whole world his kingdom, the punishment of the world and the Hereafter will not be waived for him.

People with vigor and people of strength do not care for such things; they remain focused only on achieving the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. They focus all their effort and exhaust themselves in achieving the pleasure of Allah ﷻ, selflessness, and the descent of perpetual spiritual meanings into the heart [that are the fruits of attaining a perpetual state]. I hope from friends like yourself that you will not forget this sinful one and will ask for the mercy, forgiveness, and pleasure of Allah ﷻ for him [referring to himself].[15]

In another letter, he writes:

Due to the increased distance in time between the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and ourself and also the closeness of our time to the Day of Judgment, innovations are increasing and their darkness is engulfing the world. The Sunnas have become scarce and their light is fading away. It is important that we strive vigorously to revive the extinct Sunnas, spread the knowledge of the Shari'a and understand that the true meaning of the revival of the Sunnas is attainment of the pleasure of Allah ﷻ and also closeness to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. It is mentioned in the hadith that whosoever revives a Sunna which has waned in practice will receive the reward of a hundred martyrs. The first step in reviving a Sunna is to practice it oneself, then to spread it and encourage others to follow it.[16]

Shaikh Thānwī writes in *Ta'līm al-Dīn*:

'Rectification of the false belief that following the Shari'a is not important for becoming a Sufi' is originally from the book *Futuḥāt Makkia* [by Ibn 'Arabī] in which it also says, 'Anything that opposes the reality of the Shari'a is falsehood.' It says in another place,

> 'Whosoever says there is another path to Allah ﷻ besides the Shari'a is a liar. Therefore, such a person should not be chosen to be one's spiritual mentor who does not have propriety.' It also says, 'There is no way for us except the Shari'a and that which He has taught us in the Shari'a.' Shaikh Bāyazīd Busṭāmī says, 'Do not be fooled if you observe a person bestowed with supernatural wonders [*karāmāt*] even if he flies in the sky, unless you see him strict upon the laws of the Shari'a, upon avoiding the forbidden acts, and vigilant about staying within the boundaries of the Shari'a.' Shaikh Junaid says, 'All the different avenues are closed to the world except the one which follows the Blessed Prophet ﷺ every step of the way.' In another place in *Fūtūḥāt* it says, 'He has no worth in the eyes of Allah ﷻ who does not know His rule [the Shari'a] because Allah ﷻ has never made any ignorant person a friend.' It also says in *Fūtūḥāt*, 'It is better to commit a vulgar act with knowledge than in ignorance.'

Shaikh Thānwī says, "This is because if a scholar utters something offensive, it will not reach the extent of disbelief. Since he is aware of it being offensive, he will most likely repent. On the other hand, an ignorant person sometimes will perform even necessary worship incorrectly and perpetrate acts of disbelief unknowingly and will not be fortunate enough to repent because of being unaware of his wrongdoing."

Shaikh Thānwī wrote at length on this topic in his book *Ta'līm al-Dīn*.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE KNOWER AND THE IGNORANT

Once my father was bathing on a humid day and two or three of his students were pouring buckets of water over him. A man sitting nearby said, "Shaikh, isn't this wasteful [*isrāf*]?" He replied, "For you, not for me." The man said, "How is that possible?" My father replied, "Because I am a knower while you are ignorant."[17] The man then said, "Then it is true what is said that *Maulvīs*[18] make everything permissible for themselves." My father said, "Absolutely! *Maulvīs* defend themselves against this truth without reason. One thing will be impermissible because of the ignorance of the ignorant and at the same time permissible because of the knowledge of the knower."

Abū Sa'īd Khudrī ﷺ narrates that Bilāl ﷺ brought a basket full of inferior quality dates. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ asked, "Where did you get this from?" He replied, "I had some inferior quality dates; I exchanged two kilos of the inferior quality dates for one kilo of the premium ones." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Oh no, this is usury! Never do this! If you ever wish to buy like this again, first sell the inferior quality dates for a specific amount and then purchase the premium dates with that amount."[19]

It is obvious that an ignoramus will never see the difference. He would only understand that one kilo of premium dates were purchased with two kilos of inferior quality dates. A knower, however, will use the permissible way to make the purchase. For example, he will sell the inferior quality dates for two rupees and then use those two rupees to purchase one kilo of premium dates.

## LETTERS OF SHAIKH MADANĪ

Shaikh Madanī also stressed in his letters that the objective of Sulūk is the attainment of iḥsān only. In one letter, he says:

> "My respected brother! The real objective of Sulūk is the attainment of iḥsān:
>
> أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ
>
> That you worship your Lord as if you see him
>
> And that is that the [spiritual] trait of perpetual consciousness of Allah ﷻ is born from Sulūk. As far as the ultimate goal, it should be to attain the pleasure of Allah ﷻ.
>
> One of the means of achieving the pleasure of Allah ﷻ is to work diligently to inculcate true love for Allah ﷻ and to nurture that love to the extent that the heart extricates itself [from the love of] everything else. Likewise, all the methods, be it spiritual exertions or rectification of morals, are also means to achieve the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. The earlier sufis gave priority to moral rectification; however, sometimes a person dies before attaining spiritual closeness to Allah ﷻ [*wuṣūl ila Allāh*] and as a result one is deprived of this great blessing,

departing from this world before attaining this gift of Allah ﷻ. The later sufis, though, were more sagacious in their approach; they gave precedence to closeness to Allah ﷻ and concentrated on the essence of Allah ﷻ. In creating a stronger closeness to Allah ﷻ, they helped produce the quality of perpetual consciousness of Allah ﷻ. When it is done in the manner taught by the later sufis this quality of perpetual consciousness of Allah ﷻ becomes deeply entrenched in the heart and the evil traits dissipate. Anyhow, you should always be engrossed in the essence of Allah ﷻ, whether it is by engrossing oneself in the essence of Allah ﷻ or any one of His complete attributes, and maintain the state of, 'Those who are diligent in their ṣalāt.'[20]

It is only natural for a human to have shortcomings in his actions, but it is his responsibility to make every effort to eliminate these shortcomings and to recite *wa iyyāka nastaʿīn* (and we ask for help from you only) with sincerity. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said in one of his supplications:

مَا عَبَدْنَاكَ حَقَّ عِبَادَتِكَ

We did not worship You as was Your right[21]

Thus, it is our responsibility to perpetually rectify our actions, purify our intentions, and repent to Allah ﷻ because of the reality of our continuous shortcomings. While hoping for His mercy one should also always be fearful of His wrath because faith lies between fear and hope. Always, be constant in adhering to the Sunnas of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ in every situation. Although, you are not in need of the devotions it is better you continue those of the prescribed meditations [*murāqaba*] that you find more suitable for yourself in order to gain spiritual strength. Also, read *al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*[22] and *Imdād al-Sulūk*[23] often.[24]

In another long letter, Shaikh Madanī writes:

Hold to the Sunnas of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ in your heart and in your sight as best as you can. Never be ignorant towards dhikr of Allah ﷻ. Always be repentant to Allah ﷻ for your ignorance and sins. Do not waste this precious time.

In the next letter, he writes:

> Is it not true that you have left the prescribed devotions? When you become zealous you work hard for a month or two but then quit soon after. Is it not true that you are not punctual in the congregational ṣalāt? Is it not true that you miss Fajr in the morning and sleep until sunrise? Do these types of events in your life not hurt your well-wishers? Anyhow, it is important that you rectify yourself. Strive to adhere to the Sunnas of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and revival of the Shari'a. When you face hardship then you remember Allah ﷻ and when Allah ﷻ grants you ease and comfort, you become indifferent. Make the dhikr of Allah ﷻ your habit as much as you can.

In another letter, he writes:

> The different spiritual states you wrote to me of are comforting and good, but steadfastness is better than miracles [*al-istiqāma fauq al-karāma*]. Dreams, illuminations, or divine inspirations are only to encourage the seeker and keep him steadfast [on the path of Sulūk] like a toy that is given to a child to keep it occupied. The famous saying of the elders is:
>
> تِلْكَ خِيَالَاتٌ تُرَبَّى بِهَا اَطْفَالُ الطَّرِيْقَة
>
> They are toys by which the children of the path are raised.[25]
>
> The only things required of us are worship, perpetual dhikr of Allah ﷻ, adherence to the Sunna of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, and following the Shari'a. The completion of faith is based on steadfastness upon these requirements and attaining the level of iḥsān. Fear and hope of Allah ﷻ are two signs of the completion of faith. Weeping [*bukā'*] and grief [*ḥuzn*] are two spiritual qualities that are the unique traits of the Chishtiyya path.[26]

In the next letter, Shaikh Madanī writes:

> O Respected one! Hardships of the world are also His mercy, and it is through hardship that He brings His servant closer to Him, otherwise this person would become Pharaoh and Hāmān declaring *ana rabbukum al-aʿlā* [I am your great Lord]. The evidence of his rebelliousness to Allah ﷻ is the aya:
>
> وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِن يُنَزِّلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَّا يَشَاءُ ۚ إِنَّهُ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ
>
> *Should Allah ﷻ expand the provision for His servants* [*to its full extent*]*, they would spread msichief on earth; but He sends down what He wills in* [*due*] *measure.*[27]
>
> Allah ﷻ is continuously testing us, sometimes through riches and sometimes through hardship:
>
> وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً
>
> *We test you through bad and good.*[28]
>
> In another place, Allah ﷻ says:
>
> وَبَلَوْنَاهُم بِالْحَسَنَاتِ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ
>
> *We tested them through good and bad situations.*[29]
>
> Thus, this world is a trial in which we are tested in different ways. We should make every effort to overcome these trials and should not enamor ourselves with anything but our Everlasting True Master. Make the correct intention for anything you do and it will become an act of worship. As the hadith says, 'Verily all actions are based on intentions.' Even your sleeping, eating, drinking, and the necessities [of life] can be converted into acts of worship. Any medium that

leads to an act of worship is also an an act of worship. The purpose of dhikr and cogitation [*fikr*] is only to attain the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. Fulfillment of a desire, purification of the heart, gaining the powers of clairvoyance and supernatural wonders, experiencing the blessings and illuminations, attainment of the passing away of the self [*fanā*] or subsistence [*baqā*], rising to the hierarchy of the sufis [*quṭubiyya* or *gauthiyya*] are all subjective and not the objective. To aim for these things and to make them one's goal is dangerous.

All the above mentioned experiences and states are only mediums. The only true objective is the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. It is the goal of the servant to achieve total servitude to Allah ﷻ. Be strong and strive on this path and keep in mind the goal of sincerity and servitude to Allah ﷻ.[30]

In another letter, he writes:

This lifetime and its every second are precious gems. We are wasting them in our ignorance and nothing will come of this except regret and grief for our actions. And what is to happen when we are asked:

أَوَلَمْ نُعَمِّرْكُم مَّا يَتَذَكَّرُ فِيهِ مَن تَذَكَّرَ وَجَاءَكُمُ النَّذِيرُ
فَذُوقُوا فَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِن نَّصِيرٍ

*Did We not give you an age in your life in which lesson could have been learnt by the one who wished to take lesson? And* [*furthermore*] *the warner had* [*also*] *come to you. So, have a taste, because the wrongdoers will have no supporter.*[31]

My respected friend, wasting this time because of your friends and loved ones is such a foolish mistake. Ponder on this and try to understand the importance of this matter. This frivolity and merriment seem exciting, but at the time of death and after, one will be cursing these a thousand times over. Try as much as possible to abstain from such wasteful and petty pastimes:

لَا تُلْهِكُمْ أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

*Your riches and your children must not divert you from the remembrance of Allah ﷻ.*[32]

Ponder upon this:

الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمَلًا

*Wealth and children are the embellishment of the worldly life, and the everlasting virtues are better with your Lord, both in rewards and in creating good hopes.*[33]

Do not ignore these ayas. This period of youth and good health are great blessings that you must not allow to go to waste. Every second is an opportunity for you to return to Allah ﷻ. If you don't care about any of this, then it is your own loss. Do not waste these precious moments and do not allow heedlessness to grow in the city of your soul:

نِعْمَتَانِ مَغْبُوْنٌ فِيْهِمَا كَثِيْرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ اَلصِّحَّةُ وَ الْفَرَاغُ

'Two blessings of Allah ﷻ in which many people are at a loss: health and freetime.[34]'

Value this time and continue with the inhalatant-exhalant exercise [*pās anfās*—inhaling with the name of Allah ﷻ and exhaling with *hu*] until it becomes involuntary, the heart remembers Allah ﷻ perpetually and the path of Sulūk is traversed.[35]

## IBN TAIMIYYA, IBN QAYYIM AND TAṢAWWUF

The spiritual masters have articulated in their writings that the only objective of this path is attaining iḥsān. The different exercises and tedious devotions which the sufis designed are for sicknesses of the heart. It is similar to the various sicknesses and diseases of the physical body which physicians and traditional healers seek to cure by prescribing new medications. Just as no one calls their latest treatments innovations, likewise it is our misunderstanding of this field to call the treatments of the sufis innovations. They are not objectives, but treatments for specific illnesses of the heart.

Ibn Taimiyya wrote extensively on the actions of the heart in his booklet, *al-Tuḥfat al-'Irāqiyya fi al-A'māl al-Qalbiyya*. He says:

> These few words elucidate the actions of the heart which are called temporal spiritual states and perpetual spiritual states. They are the pillars and foundation of Dīn, such as: love for Allah ﷻ and his Blessed Prophet ﷺ, dependence on Allah ﷻ [*tawakkul*], sincerity, gratitude [*shukr*], patience [*ṣabr*], fear of Allah ﷻ [*khauf*], hope in Allah ﷻ [*rajā*] etc. The attainment of all these attributes is obligatory upon the community; and there is no difference of opinion in this matter.
>
> There are three types of people in relation to the inner qualities as there are three types in relation to the actions of the physical body:
>
> 1 The transgressor [*ẓālim*]
> 2 The moderate [*muqtaṣid*]
> 3 The exceller in good [*sābiq bi al-khairāt*]
>
> The transgressor is one who neglects the orders of Allah ﷻ and commits forbidden acts. The moderate is one who fulfills the orders of Allah ﷻ and avoids forbidden acts. The exceller is one who strives to his utmost to gain nearness to Allah ﷻ. He is not content with fulfilling the necessary acts and avoiding the forbidden acts only, but also strives to perform all the Sunnas and desirables and to avoid all the undesirables. Though the exceller commits sins, he is forgiven either by repentance, good deeds, or trials and tribulations. Both the moderate and the exceller are amongst the friends of Allah ﷻ who are mentioned in the following aya of the Qur'an:

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

*Listen, the friends of Allah ﷻ shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.*[36]

> Therefore, the believers and God-fearing are the friends of Allah ﷻ. Then, the God-fearing are of two types: the general and the special. The general are the moderates and the special are the excellers in good.

After this, Ibn Taimiyya wrote a short treatise on the actions of the heart. He wrote about truth and falsehood and that love of Allah ﷻ, sincerity towards Him, reliance on Him, pleasing Him, and other actions of the heart of this kind are obligatory. He then talks at length about reliance on Allah ﷻ, of the obligations of Dīn, and that love of Allah ﷻ and love of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ are essential. Furthermore, he talks about the one who loves Allah ﷻ, the attributes of those who are loved by Him, and that the basis of love of Allah ﷻ is adherence to His Dīn. He explains that hope and fear of Allah ﷻ are both the substance of faith and narrates the sayings of the sufis and earlier sages [*qudamā*] about the love of Allah ﷻ. One of the manifestations of the love of Allah ﷻ is adherence to the Sunna of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and that adherence to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ will exoterically and esoterically build love of Allah ﷻ. He talks about this last point in detail. It is a book worth reading.

Ibn Qayyim, in *al-Wābil al-Ṣayyib min al-Kalām al-Ṭayyib*[37], states the conditions for being a mentor. One of them is that if a person wants to make bai'a with a mentor, he should first investigate whether the person is amongst the people who lives in the remembrance of Allah ﷻ and is not amongst the heedless ones. He should be strict on the Sunna, not a follower of the self, and should be cautious in his matters. If such a spiritual mentor is met, he should hold onto him tightly. He then narrates the habit of Ibn Taimiyya that, "Once, I went to my mentor. He sat after praying Fajr ṣalāt, doing the dhikr of Allah ﷻ until midday. He said to me, 'This dhikr is my breakfast in the morning. If I do not eat this food I will become weak; and I only avoid dhikr to give myself breath for dhikr at another time.'"

Another one of Ibn Qayyim's books, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, is also on Taṣawwuf. It is a commentary of the classic text on Taṣawwuf, *Manāzil*

*al-Sālikīn*, by Shaikh Abū Ismaīl 'Abd Allāh Harawī Ḥanbalī [1088 C.E.]. All the discussions in this book are on Taṣawwuf. He writes:

> Servitude of a human is divided into branches: the heart, the tongue, and the other limbs. The essentials of the heart are: sincerity, reliance on Allah ﷻ, love, patience, fear and hope, true and strong belief, and purity of intention…It is the consensus of the community [in general] that these actions of the heart are obligatory.

After this, he mentions the actions of the heart upon which the scholars disagree:

> Contentment [as opposed to patience which is obligatory] upon a tribulation is disagreed upon as to whether it is obligatory [and in this respect there are two opinions: the opinion of the jurists and the opinion of the sufis]… and another thing upon which they disagree is concentration [*khushū'*] in ṣalāt. [Their disagreement is composed of two opinions on whether the ṣalāt will be repeated if one is overcome by satanic whispers [*waswās*] in ṣalāt].

He also talks about the two types of prohibitions [*muḥarramāt*]: disbelief and sin:

> The example of disbelief is: doubtfulness, hypocrisy, paganism, etc. Sins are of two types: major and minor. Major: ostentation, vanity, arrogance, haughtiness, despair in the mercy of Allah ﷻ, to be fearless of the punishment of Allah ﷻ, to gain pleasure from seeing other Muslims in anguish, to express one's satisfaction at seeing a Muslim in turmoil, to desire for the spread of promiscuity amongst Muslims, to be jealous of Muslims, and other sins which are more heinous than observable major sins like fornicating and drinking alcohol.
>
> Without repentance to Allah ﷻ, the heart cannot be purified of such spiritual evils. If one does not repent, the heart will be severely corrupted, and when the heart is corrupted, the whole body in turn will be corrupted. Purification of the heart precedes purification of the body, and if the heart is not purified it will be deprived of everything that is in a purified heart.

Ibn Qayyim speaks at length on this subject. We should know that the spiritual masters of Taṣawwuf put their students through spiritual exertions to help them attain this purification of heart.

## MORALS OF THE SUFI

Shaikh Mīratī writes in his biography of Shaikh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī, *Tadhkirat al-Rashīd*, "I found a note in which Shaikh Gangohī had scribbled something. He wrote it some time in his early years for some unknown reason. He wrote:

عِلْمُ الصُّوْفِيَةِ عِلْمُ الدِّيْنِ ظَاهِرًا وَ بَاطِنًا وَ قُوَّةُ الْيَقِيْنِ وَهُوَ الْعِلْمُ الْاَعْلَي حَالُهُمْ
اِصْلَاحُ الْاَخْلَاقِ وَدَوَامُ الْاَفْتِقَارِ اِلَي اللهِ تَعَالَي حَقِيْقَةُ التَّصَوُّفِ التَّخَلُّقُ
بِاَخْلَاقِ اللهِ تَعَالَي وَسَلْبُ الْاِرَادَةِ وَكَوْنُ الْعَبْدِ فِي رَضَاءِ اللهِ تَعَالَي اَخْلَاقُ
الصُّوْفِيَةِ مَا هُوَ خُلُقُهُ عَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةُ وَ السَّلَامُ بِقَوْلِهِ إِنَّكَ لَعَلَي خُلُقٍ عَظِيْمٍ وَ مَا
وَرَدَ بِهِ الْحَدِيْثُ وَتَفْصِيْلُ اَخْلَاقِهِمْ هَكَذَا : اَلتَّوَاضُعُ ضِدُّهُ الْكِبْرُ — اَلْمُدَارَاةُ
وَ اِحْتِمَالُ الْاَذي عَنِ الْخَلْقِ — اَلْمُعَامَلَةُ بِرِفْقٍ وَخُلُقٍ حَسَنٍ وَتَرْكِ غَضَبٍ وَ
غَيْضٍ — اَلْمُوَاسَاةُ وَ الْاِيْثَارُ بِفَرْطِ الشَّفَقَةِ عَلَي الْخَلْقِ وَ هُوَتَقْدِيْمُ حُقُوْقِ الْخَلْقِ
عَلَي حُظُوْظِهِ — اَلسَّخَاوَةُ — اَلتَّجَاوُزُ — اَلْعَفْوُ وَ طَلَاقَةُ الْوَجْهِ وَالْبَشَرَةِ — اَلسُّهُوْلَةُ
وَلِيْنُ الْجَانِبِ — تَرْكُ التَّعَسُّفِ وَ التَّكَلُّفِ — اِنْفَاقٌ بِلَا اِقْتَارٍ وَ تَرْكُ الْاِدِّخَارِ
— اَلتَّوَكُّلُ — اَلْقَنَاعَةُ بِيَسِيْرٍ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا — اَلْوَرَعُ — تَرْكُ الْمِرَاءِ وَ الْجِدَالِ وَ الْعَتَبِ
اِلَّا بِحَقٍّ — تَرْكُ الْغِلِّ وَالْحِقْدِ وَالْحَسَدِ — تَرْكُ الْمَالِ وَالْجَاهِ — وَفَاءُ الْعَهْدِ —
اَلْحِلْمُ — اَلْاَنَاءَةُ — اَلتَّوَادُّ وَ التَّوَافُقُ مَعَ الْاِخْوَانِ وَالْعُزْلَةِ عَنِ الْاَغْيَارِ — شُكْرُ
الْمُنْعِمِ — بَذْلُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ

اَلصُّوْفِيْ يُهَذِّبُ الظَّاهِرَ وَالْبَاطِنَ فِي الْاَخْلَاقِ وَالتَّصَوُّفُ اَدَبٌ كُلُّهُ – اَدَبُ الْحَضْرِةِ الْاِلٰهِيَةِ اَلْاَعْرَاضُ عَمَّنْ سِوَاهُ حَيَاءً وَاِجْلَالًا وَهَيْبَةً اَسْوَءُ الْمَعَاصِيْ حَدِيْثُ النَّفْسِ وَ سَبَبُ الظُّلْمَةِ

[Translation] The science of the sufis is the esoteric, exoteric knowledge of Dīn and strength of belief; and this is the greatest of sciences. The way of the sufis is perfecting their morals and perpetual absorption in Allah ﷻ. The essence of Taṣawwuf is to be embellished with the meanings of the attributes [*ṣifāt*] of Allah ﷻ [as humanly as possible], to eliminate the will of the self, and have a perpetual infatuation to please Allah ﷻ. The morals of the sufis are the same as the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ as mentioned in the Qur'an, '*And you are surely on an excellent standard of character*.'[38] All that is mentioned in the aḥādīth is also inclusive of the morals of the sufis. Below is a description of the morals of the sufis:

- To think lowly of oneself and this is the opposite of arrogance
- To be compassionate to the creation of Allah ﷻ and to overlook the transgressions of the creation against oneself
- To treat others with kindness and warmth and to avoid anger
- To sympathize with others and to prefer them over oneself because of one's overwhelming love for them; in essence, to favor the rights of others over one's own rights
- To be generous
- To forgive others and to overlook their mistakes
- To be sanguine and cheerful
- To be soft-spoken
- To avoid ostentation
- To spend without stinginess and to avoid overspending such that one becomes needy
- Reliance on the Creator
- To be content with whatever little one possesses of the material world
- To be austere

- To avoid arguments and altercations and to avoid criticizing another unless it is with truth
- To avoid jealousy or hatred of another
- To fulfill promises
- Forbearance
- To have insight
- To love fellow Muslims and have good relations with them and to avoid others
- To be grateful when someone does a favor
- To exhaust oneself for the good of other Muslims

The moral character [*akhlāq*] of the sufi is achieved through his purification of the inner and the outer and Taṣawwuf is the name of propriety. Propriety towards the Creator is turning away from everyone but Him out of awe and fear of His might. The worst of sins is to converse with the lower self [*ḥadīth al-nafs*], as it spreads darkness over the heart.

## ENDNOTES

1 The six spiritual essences of the soul occupy different locations on the physical body. The Naqshbandiyya teach meditation of the name of Allah ﷻ in the six essences. After considerable time and practice, the six essences are rejuvenated with the remembrance of Allah ﷻ. This may, at times, result in involuntary and unprovoked pulsation of the body. This pulsation is the dhikr of the physical body which has been infused with the constant remembrance of Allah ﷻ and is being described as "turning like the spinning wheel."

2 *Arwāḥ-e-Thalātha*, p. 299

3 11:5

4 Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Aḥad Sarhindī [971/1034]—His title was '*Mujaddid Alf-e-Thānī*' [Reviver of the Second Millenium]. His reformist nature began to show at an early

stage in his life. After mastering the Islamic sciences at the age of seventeen, he wrote two books, both of which quelled the two controversies that was dividing Muslims at the time. The first was on the proof of prophethood and the second against the dominating minority, the twelver Shiites. After his father passed away, he travelled to Delhi and made bai'a with the shaikh of the Naqshbandiyya path, Khawāja Bāqī Billa. His mentor, granted him successorship soon after, and informed him of the [perpetual] spiritual states he will achieve in life.

His most famous work is his collection of letters, the *Maktūbāt,* to his spiritual students in three volumes. These letters became the catalyst which helped secure the place of Islam in the Indian subcontinent saving it from obliteration.

In these letters, the shaikh reconstructed the theory of the divine existential unity of Allah and the world [*waḥdat al-wujūd*] into the concept of the unity of vision [*waḥdat al shuhūd*]. Through this, Shaikh Aḥmad was able to save Taṣawwuf from the pseudo-Sufis who tried to create heresy through the sufistic concept of the divine existential unity of Allah and the world. The letters also helped prepare the downfall of the religion founded by the Moghul king, Akbar and his syncretistic tendencies that became the cornerstone of his doctrine, *'Dīn-i-Ilāhī'* [Religion of God]. They also broke the stranglehold of Shiite influence upon the subcontinent and revived Sunni Islam. These letters, in other words, sum up the life and struggle of Shaikh Aḥmad Sirhindī against the unrelenting forces that threatened to wipe out Islam in the Indian subcontinent; and this is precisely why he is called 'Reviver of the Second Millenium.' [ See *Ḥaḍrat Mujaddid Alf-e-Thānī*, Sayyid Zawwār Ḥussain Shāh]

5 9:72

6 A political party in India at the time

7 This refers to an incident that took place in the early years of Shaikh Zakariyyā's life. Shaikh Ḥabīb al-Raḥmān once stopped over at Sahāranpūr to debate with Shaikh Zakariyyā about Taṣawwuf. He asked, "I have a quick question. You can chew over it and save the answer for when I return from Raipūr. What is this thing called Taṣawwuf?" Shaikh Zakariyyā responded spontaneously, "It begins with '*all actions are based on intentions*' and ends with attainment of iḥsān." Shaikh Ḥabīb stood dumbfounded for a few seconds then finally said, "I had come prepared with many arguments that if you say this I will say such and such and if you say that, I will say this, but your answer has left me dumbstruck." Shaikh Zakariyyā replied, "you can spend your whole life searching for an answer, but I assure you that you won't find one."

8 Autobiography of Shaikh Zakariyyā

9 The path of friendship [with Allah ﷻ] and the path of prophethood are two different spiritual programs for achieving iḥsān. Both the path of friendship and prophethood require strict adherence to the Shari'a, the main difference being that the path of friendship also incorporates spiritual exertions and devotions into its program. Though, most people are taken through the path of friendship, some who are not suited to this path are taken through the path of prophethood. An example of this is given in the chapter on visualization of the mentor.

10 6:79

11 *Maktūbāt Khāwaja Muḥammad Ma'ṣūm*, p. 121

12 A Sufi who was condemned and executed for saying, *"Ana al-Ḥaqq,"* though it was uttered in a spiritually intoxicated state.

13 *Āp Bītī*, 5/197

14 Ibid, 5/198

15 *Maktūbāt Khawāja Muḥammad Ma'ṣūm*, p. 174

16 Ibid, p. 290

17 The ruling is that if one uses water to gain coolness from hot weather he may use as much water as necessary to gain coolness. But if he is bathing he may not use more than the amount required in Shari'a and any water used over the required amount will be considered wasteful.

18 A disparaging epithet used for the rank and file graduates of Islamic studies in the Indian subcontinent.

19 Bukhārī, *idhā Bā' al-Wakīl*

20 23:2

21 Mustadrak, *li Man Shi'tu min khalqī*

22 A complicated book written on the deeper meanings of Taṣawwuf by Sayyid Shah Ismā'īl Shahīd

23 A book on Taṣawwuf by Shaikh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī. Most shaikhs advise their successors to read and review Imdād al-Sulūk periodically.

24 *Maktūbāt Shaikh al-Islām* 3/66

25 *Maktūbāt Shaikh al-Islām* 3/168, Letter # 57

26 *Maktūbāt Shaikh al-Islām* 3/168, Letter # 57

27 42: 27

28 21:35

29 7:168

30 *Maktūbāt Shaikh al-Islām* 3/59, p. 129

31 35:37

32 63:9

33 18:46

34 Bukhārī, *lā 'Aisha illā 'Aishat al-Ākhira*

35 *Maktūbāt Shaikh al-Islām* 72/188, p. 48

36 10: 62

37 This work is about the dhikr and temporal spiritual states of the Sufis.

38 68: 4

التَّاسِعُ

# Chapter Nine

# BAIʿA

## THE SUNNA OF *BAIʿA*

*People* raise objections to many practices of the sufis. One of them is taking of baiʿa, even though baiʿa is not even necessary in the view of the sufis, as I will mention later. However, the practice of taking baiʿa is deeply rooted in the Qur'an and the Sunna. In Sūrat al-Mumtaḥina, Allah ﷻ says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَى أَنْ لَا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا
يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا يَزْنِينَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ وَلَا يَأْتِينَ بِبُهْتَانٍ يَفْتَرِينَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ
وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلَا يَعْصِينَكَ فِي مَعْرُوفٍ فَبَايِعْهُنَّ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ
رَحِيمٌ

> *O you who believe, when the believing women come to you, seeking baiʿa with you that they will not ascribe any partner to Allah ﷻ, and will not commit theft, and will not commit fornication, and will not kill their children, and will not come up with a false claim* [*about the parentage of a child*] *that they falsely attribute* [*to the sperms of their husbands being dropped*] *between their hands and their feet* [*i.e. their private parts*], *and will not disobey you in what is recognized* [*in*

> *Shari'a*] *then take them in your bai'a, and pray Allah ﷻ for their forgiveness. Surely, Allah ﷻ is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.*[1]

In the commentary, Shaikh Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī writes:

> This aya is clear proof of bai'a and a repudiation of the ritual bai'a that is bereft of any desire to perform good deeds.
>
> It says in a hadith of *Bukhārī*:
>
> عَنْ عُبَادَةَ بْنِ صَامِتٍ وَكَانَ شَهِدَ بَدْرًا وَهُوَ أَحَدُ النُّقَبَاءِ لَيْلَةَ الْعَقَبَةِ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللّٰهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَالَ وَحَوْلَهُ عِصَابَةٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِهِ بَايِعُونِي عَلَى أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكُوا بِاللّٰهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا تَسْرِقُوا وَلَا تَزْنُوا وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ وَلَا تَأْتُوا بِبُهْتَانٍ تَفْتَرُونَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَرْجُلِكُمْ وَلَا تَعْصُوا فِي مَعْرُوفٍ فَمَنْ وَفَى مِنْكُمْ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللّٰهِ، وَمَنْ أَصَابَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ شَيْئًا فَعُوقِبَ فِي الدُّنْيَا فَهُوَ كَفَّارَةٌ لَهُ وَمَنْ أَصَابَ مِن ذَلِكَ شَيْئًا ثُمَّ سَتَرَهُ اللّٰهُ، فَهُوَ إِلَى اللّٰهِ، إِنْ شَاءَ عَفَا عَنْهُ وَإِنْ شَاءَ عَاقَبَهُ فَبَايَعْنَاهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ
>
> 'Ubāda ibn Ṣāmit ﷺ who participated in the battle of Badr and was one of the leaders in the night of *'Aqaba*, narrates that once when the Companions ﷺ gathered by him the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said:
>
> > Come, take bai'a with me upon the belief that you will not equate anything with Allah ﷻ, will not steal, fornicate, or murder your own children, and that you will not accuse anyone of anything and will not stand against one who speaks the truth. Whosoever fulfills this bai'a will receive the reward from Allah ﷻ and whosoever commits anyone of these will taste retribution in this world. This punishment in the world will be atonement for his sin. And if Allah ﷻ hides his sin, He may forgive or punish in the Hereafter. This is Allah's ﷻ discretion.

'Ubāda ﷺ says, "We took bai'a with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ on these deeds."[2] This bai'a was not the bai'a of Islam or the bai'a to struggle in the path of Allah ﷻ, but the bai'a made by the sufis to emphasize practicing upon the tenets and commandments of Islam.

Shāh Walī Allah ﷻ Dehlawī wrote extensively in his book *al-Qaul al-Jamīl* [later translated into *Shifā' al-'Alīl*]. He says:

Allah ﷻ said:

*Those who pledge allegiance with you* [*by placing their hands in your hands*] *they, in fact, pledge allegiance with Allah ﷻ. Allah's ﷻ hand is over their hands. Then, whoever breaks his pledge breaks it to his own detriment, and whoever fulfills the covenant he has made with Allah ﷻ, He will give him a great reward.*[3]

It is also stated in the well-known aḥādīth [*mashhūr*] that the Companions ﷺ sometimes made bai'a to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ upon migration; upon struggling in the path of Allah ﷻ; upon adherence to the pillars of Islam like ṣalāt, fasting, haj, zakāt; upon steadfastness in the battlefield against the disbelievers as in the bai'a of *Riḍwān;* upon adherence to the Sunnas of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ; to save against innovations and to passionately perform good deeds. Therefore, it is mentioned in an authentic hadith that the women of the Helpers took bai'a with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ to cease the custom of wailing in funerals.

In the narration of *Ibn Māja*, it is mentioned that some poor Emigrants took bai'a with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ to avoid asking anything from anyone. By the blessings of this bai'a if anything [even a whip] fell from their mount, they dismounted to retrieve it themselves and refused to take anyone's help. And this much is known that when the Blessed Prophet ﷺ did anything as an act of worship and not by nature, it is categorized as a proper Sunna. Once this is understood we should ask ourselves as to which category does this type of bai'a fall under? Now, some people believe that bai'a is for when someone is chosen as the caliph and sultan and that the bai'a of the sufis holds no meaning in the Sharī'a. But we know this to be false because of the previous narrations that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ

sometimes took baiʿa to establish the pillars of Islam while at other times for adherence to the Sunnas. Even the hadith of *Bukhārī* proves this; namely that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ stipulated to Jarīr ؓ in the baiʿa that he would be kind and loving toward all Muslims.

The Helpers took baiʿa with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ to never be concerned with the criticism of people in matters of Dīn and to speak the truth wherever they may be. Therefore, some of them were fearless in publicly criticizing and rejecting the ruthless governors and amirs when they did wrong. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ also took baiʿa from the women of the Helpers to abstain from wailing in funerals. Baiʿa is a fact that is proven in many other matters also, many of them relating to purification of the heart, and enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. This method of baiʿa was discontinued during the reign of the sultans from fear of repercussions from the sultans. During that time, the sufis resorted to distributing patched pieces of cloth [*kharqa*] to the seekers and when the custom of baiʿa died out amongst the sultans, the sufis revived the Sunna of baiʿa.

After this, Shāh Walī Allāh begins a new chapter about whether baiʿa is necessary or Sunna. The Companions ؓ made baiʿa with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and used it as a means to gain closeness to Allah ﷻ. There is no evidence as to whether one who does not make baiʿa is sinful or that any of the pious predecessors reprimanded one who did not make the baiʿa.

Shāh Walī Allāh writes in *al-Qaul al-Jamīl*:

The baiʿa that is customary amongst the sufis is of many kinds. The first kind is in which one repents for all past sins. Another kind is when one makes baiʿa to gain blessings from the line of the sufis [amongst whom he is making baiʿa]. This is similar to the blessings gained by belonging to a chain of transmission of aḥādīth as that also carries blessings. The third kind of baiʿa is to purify the intention to achieve total sincerity towards Allah ﷻ and to prevent oneself from committing evil deeds of the heart and body, and to establish a relationship with Allah ﷻ. This is the main baiʿa while the previous two are forms of worship. Fulfillment of the third baiʿa means to be steadfast upon abstinence from sins, to struggle against the lower self in order to perform good deeds, and to engage in spiritual exercises that discipline the lower self against shirking from good deeds until

one is infused with the effervescent light of tranquility [*iṭmi'nān*], which eventually becomes his nature.

In *al-Takashshuf*, Shaikh Thānwī writes:

كُنَّا عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ –صلى الله عليه وسلم– تِسْعَةً أَوْ ثَمَانِيَةً أَوْ سَبْعَةً فَقَالَ أَلَا تُبَايِعُونَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَكُنَّا حَدِيثَ عَهْدٍ بِبَيْعَةٍ فَقُلْنَا قَدْ بَايَعْنَاكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ أَلَا تُبَايِعُونَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فَقُلْنَا قَدْ بَايَعْنَاكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ أَلَا تُبَايِعُونَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ فَبَسَطْنَا أَيْدِيَنَا وَقُلْنَا قَدْ بَايَعْنَاكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ فَعَلَامَ نُبَايِعُكَ قَالَ عَلَى أَنْ تَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَالصَّلَوَاتِ الْخَمْسِ وَتُطِيعُوا – وَأَسَرَّ كَلِمَةً خَفِيَّةً – وَلَا تَسْأَلُوا النَّاسَ شَيْئًا فَلَقَدْ رَأَيْتُ بَعْضَ أُولَئِكَ النَّفَرِ يَسْقُطُ سَوْطُ أَحَدِهِمْ فَمَا يَسْأَلُ أَحَدًا يُنَاوِلُهُ إِيَّاهُ

Auf ibn Mālik Ashjaʿī ﵁ narrates:

Once we were sitting with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. We were nine, eight, or seven men. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, 'Are you not going to make baiʿa with the Prophet?' We stretched out our hands and said, 'What should we take baiʿa upon?' 'That you will worship Allah ﷻ alone, you will not associate with Allah ﷻ, you will pray all five ṣalāts, and will listen and follow upon all the commandments.' Then he said quietly, 'And that you will never ask anyone for anything.'

The narrator says, "I observed some of them that if a whip accidentally fell from their mount, they would not ask someone to pick it up and return it to them."[4]

**Note:** The baiʿa of the sufis is of the kind in which one makes firm intention to adhere to the obligations of the Dīn, and to be persistent on the good deeds of the heart and body. In common parlance, this baiʿa is called the baiʿa of Taṣawwuf. Some of the Literalists [*Ahl al-Ẓāhir*] say it is an innovation because there is no evidence

> of it in the Sunna of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and that the only type proven in the Sunna is the bai'a of struggling in the path of Allah ﷻ or upon embracing Islam. However, the bai'a of the sufis is clearly proven in the aforementioned hadith because it was performed by the Companions رضي الله عنهم, so it surely was not bai'a upon embracing Islam. If it was, it would mean performing bai'a on something already attained. Likewise, this could not be bai'a for struggling in the path of Allah ﷻ because the words clearly emphasize the importance of performing good deeds. Thus, the objective is made clear.
>
> The majority of elders most often instruct the newly initiated in private because such instructions are usually beyond the comprehension of the general public. Thus, if it was ever made public it would result in disorder. Instructing in private is beneficial because it gives the seeker undivided attention and shows consideration toward him, which in turn engenders love in his heart [for his spiritual mentor]. It also warns others not to follow instructions prescribed for him since they [other seekers] require instructions that correspond to their own specific conditions. This method of private instruction is proven in the aforementioned aḥādīth. Furthermore, most seekers are naturally inclined to become extremely literal in understanding the instructions of their spiritual mentors. They might take both the literal as well as the actual meaning of their mentor's words.
>
> The presence of this trait [in a seeker] is confirmed in the aforementioned hadith because the Blessed Prophet ﷺ only intended to stop them from becoming dependent on others [by begging and asking from others], not that they were prohibited from taking help for their own things. However, since the possibility of the literal meaning existed [that they not even ask for their own thing from anyone], the Companions رضي الله عنهم were not wrong to think that they should not ask for their own thing from anyone either. In one hadith, it is narrated that once the Blessed Prophet ﷺ told everyone to sit down during a sermon. One of the Companions رضي الله عنه who was walking through the doorway at the time sat down where he was. It is clear from the hadith that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ did not intend for him to sit where he was but that everybody should come into the masjid and nobody should be left standing.

This is the type of love for the mentor that is absolutely essential in order for a seeker to derive spiritual benefit from his shaikh. After this

hadith, Shaikh Thānwī narrates 'Ubāda's رضي الله عنه hadith as has been narrated above. One of the other points he makes regarding this hadith is that the hadith clearly states that the people who were ordered to take bai'a with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ were all Companions رضي الله عنهم which proves that aside from the bai'a for struggling in the path of Allah ﷻ and embracing Islam, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ also took bai'a for shunning evil deeds and staying firm upon good deeds. This is the same bai'a that is called the bai'a of Taṣawwuf that is customary among the sufis. Therefore, rejection of this bai'a is foolishness.

Another point made clear from the two aforementioned aḥādīth is that it is permissible for a mentor to order his seeker to take bai'a with him for specific reasons. My relative, the respected Shaikh Yūsuf Kāndhelwī collected many excellent aḥādīth in the chapter of bai'a in his book *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥāba*. This book contains a chapter on bai'a for struggling in the path of Allah ﷻ, a chapter on bai'a of Islam, and an entire chapter titled 'bai'a on the deeds of Islam.' The narrations, their references, and chains of transmission are extremely long; we will suffice here with a few short narrations. For more narrations and their references, one may look in *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥāba*.

## NARRATIONS ABOUT BAI'A

Bashīr ibn Khaṣāṣiyya says, "I came to make bai'a with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. I asked him, 'What things should I take bai'a with you upon?' The Blessed Prophet ﷺ stretched out his hands and said, 'Bear witness that there is no God besides Allah ﷻ and that Muḥammad ﷺ is His servant and Prophet, that you will pray five times ṣalāt in their respective times, pay the zakāt, fast in the month of Ramadan, perform Haj, and go out in the path of Allah ﷻ.' He said, 'O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, I can do everything but two things. Firstly, I cannot pay zakāt because I own only ten camels which I use as mounts and to provide milk for my family. Secondly, I cannot go in the path of Allah ﷻ because I am weak-hearted and people say whoever runs away while in the path of Allah ﷻ will face the wrath of Allah ﷻ. I fear that if I go in the path of Allah ﷻ, I will run away and face the wrath of Allah ﷻ.' The Blessed Prophet ﷺ pulled back his hands and said, gesturing, 'O Bashīr, when there is neither zakāt nor struggle in the path of Allah ﷻ then how do you expect to enter Paradise?' I said, 'O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, okay, spread your hands I will take bai'a with you.'

Then, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ spread out his hands and I took bai'a with him upon the aforementioned deeds."[5]

Jarīr narrates, "I made bai'a with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ to establish ṣalāt, pay zakāt, and always be good with all Muslims."[6] In another narration the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "O Jarīr! Spread out your hands." I asked him, "For what O Blessed Prophet ﷺ?" "Upon adhering to all the commandments of Allah and to be good to all Muslims." Jarīr listened carefully to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and [being farsighted] finally said, "I will do whatever is within my capacity, O Blessed Prophet ﷺ."[7] After this, anyone who took bai'a found latitude [in fulfillment of the bai'a] with the words, "I will do whatever is within my capacity."

Abū Amāma says the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said "Is there anyone wanting to take bai'a with me?" Thaubān said, "We will take bai'a with you." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ accepted his bai'a upon the pledge to never ask anything from anybody. Thaubān asked, "What will the person who fulfills this bai'a get?" The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, "Paradise." Then, Thaubān took bai'a with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. Abū Amāma says, "I saw his whip fall from his hand when he was in a large gathering. Sometimes, it happened that it fell on a person's shoulder and the man would stand up to give it to him, but he would refuse to take it. Instead, he would dismount and pick it up himself."[8]

The narration of Abū Dharr is narrated with various chains of transmission. He says, "I made bai'a with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ on five different occasions that I would not fear the criticism of any person in fulfilling the rights of Allah." In another hadith, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said to Abū Dharr, "Wait for six days and come to me on the seventh and I will tell you something. Make sure you understand what I say to you properly." On the seventh day, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "First, I advise you to fear Allah, when you are alone or in a gathering; whenever you commit a bad deed immediately eliminate it with a good deed, do not ask anyone for anything even if your whip falls, and do not safeguard anyone's possessions."[9]

## ENDNOTES

1 60: 12

2 Bukhārī, *'Alāmat al-Īmān Ḥubb al-Anṣār*

3 48:10

4 Muslim, *Karāhat al-Mas'ala li al-Nās*

5 Musnad Aḥmad, *Ḥadīth Bashīr ibn Khaṣāṣiyya*

6 Bukhārī, *al-Dīn al-Naṣīḥa*

7 Bukhārī, *Kaifa Yubā'iyu al-Imām* [with slightly different wording]

8 *al-Mu'jim al-Kabīr*, 7/229

9 Musnad Aḥmad, *Ḥadīth Abī Dharr*

عشر

Chapter Ten

# Spiritual Exertions were Unnecessary in the Time of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ

## Effects of the Company of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ

*In the time of the Blessed Prophet* ﷺ, his blessed company was sufficient to produce the state of iḥsān. This is understood from the books of the earlier and later scholars. However, as time passed and the light of the enlightened period decreased, the hearts of Muslims became enveloped in the darkness of evils. In *Tirmidhī*, Anas ؓ narrates that everything in Madina was filled with light [*nūr*] the day the Blessed Prophet ﷺ entered the city and full of darkness the day he passed away: "We did not even brush the dirt from our hands after burying the Blessed Prophet ﷺ that we felt a change in our hearts."[1]

Ḥanẓala ؓ says:

> I came out from my house and met Abū Bakr ؓ. He asked me, 'O Ḥanẓala, how are you doing?' I said, 'Ḥanẓala is a hypocrite.' He exclaimed, 'What are you saying, O Ḥanẓala?' I said, 'When we are sitting with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and he is talking about Paradise and Hellfire, it is as if we are witnessing it. However, when we leave his presence and return to our families and are busy in our work, we forget everything.' Abū Bakr ؓ said, 'I swear by Allah ﷻ, I feel the exact same way.' Then Abū Bakr and I both came

> to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and I said, 'O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, Ḥanẓala ﷺ has become a hypocrite.' He said, 'What are you saying?' Then I explained our situation to him. He replied, 'I swear by the One in whose hands is my life, if you remain in the same state as when you are with me and are perpetually in the remembrance of Allah ﷻ [*fi al-dhikr*], the angels would shake hands with you in your beds and on the pathways, but Ḥanẓala, this is from time to time only,' and then he said three times, 'A person never remains in the same state.'[2]

The state mentioned in this hadith is reference to the state of perpetual awareness of Allah ﷻ. It is much the same with the seekers that they sometimes achieve spiritual states while in the company of their mentors but lose it once they leave their company. The word dhikr used in the above hadith includes the gatherings of dhikr. Frequent dhikr helps in attaining the level of iḥsān while abundant dhikr can even substitute for the blessed company of one's mentor.

It is mentioned in *al-Takashshuf* that Abū Ṭalḥa Anṣārī ؓ was once praying ṣalāt in his garden when he saw a bird fluttering about, unable to free itself from the entwined branches. Abū Ṭalḥa ؓ stared at it fixedly, amazed that even a bird could not free itself from his lush garden. When he returned his attention to ṣalāt, he realized he had forgotten how many units he had prayed. He said to himself, "I have been put in difficulty because of my land." Thereafter, he came to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, explained the entire matter and then said, "O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, I give this garden in the path of Allah ﷻ. Spend it wherever you wish."[3]

**Note:** One of the many practices of the sufis is to be vigilant of the heart and to make amends when the heart is forgetful of the remembrance of Allah ﷻ. The excellence of this practice is understood by the Companions ؓ act and the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ approval. It was his vigilance toward his heart which resulted in his giving away the garden to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ.

Hatred toward anything that diverts one's attention away from Allah ﷻ is called *ghaira* which is a beautiful quality for a Muslim to have. One will read in the anecdotes of the friends of Allah ﷻ that they confiscated anything from the seekers that made them forgetful of Allah ﷻ. The evidence for this is found in the abovementioned hadith. The

Blessed Prophet ﷺ approved the [spiritual] treatment the Companion ؓ prescribed for himself. In hadith terminology, the tacit approval of an act by the Blessed Prophet ﷺ is called an acknowledgement [*taqrīr*].

## INCIDENTS FROM THE LIVES OF THE COMPANIONS ؓ

Another incident which occurred during the caliphate of ʿUthman ؓ is narrated in the *Muwaṭṭa'*. One of the Companions ؓ from amongst the Helpers was once praying ṣalāt in his garden. The dates had ripened and were hanging in clusters on the date-palm trees. He took side glances at the clusters and his heart became distracted by thoughts of the garden. When his attention returned to ṣalāt, he realized he could not remember how many units he had prayed. He said to himself, "I have been put in confusion because of this garden," and came to ʿUthman ؓ. He narrated the whole incident to the caliph and said, "This garden of mine is a charity in the path of Allah ﷻ, spend it wherever you wish." ʿUthman ؓ took the garden and sold it for fifty thousand dinars. He named the garden *khamsīn*, and gave away all the money in charity.[4]

Not hundreds but thousands of such incidents are narrated in the biographies of the Companions ؓ proving that they reached the level of iḥsān without any specific practices or exhaustive exercises. Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī wrote in his commentary of the *Muwaṭṭa'*, "These incidents are manifestations of the nisba after it develops in the heart. They gave priority to the worship of Allah ﷻ over everything and felt *ghaira* in keeping in their ownership anything that distracted them from Him." Abū al-Walīd Bājī says, "There are very few such incidents where the Companions ؓ attention was diverted while performing worship but if it ever happened, they felt a burden on themselves [until they removed that thing from their ownership]." What about us who are always forgetful of Allah ﷻ in our ṣalāt? May Allah ﷻ forgive all our mistakes.

In the fifth chapter of my book *Ḥakayāt al-Ṣahāba*, there are many incidents about the concentration of the Companions ؓ in their ṣalāt. One of these stories is about ʿAbd Allāh ibn Zubair ؓ who was once praying ṣalāt while his infant son Hāshim was lying next to him. A snake fell from the roof onto Hāshim and he began to scream. People raised a hue and cry. They ran for the child and killed the snake. In the meantime, ʿAbd Allāh ibn Zubair ؓ continued to pray his ṣalāt peacefully. After he completed the ṣalāt, he asked, "I heard some noise?" His wife said, "May Allah ﷻ

have mercy on you, the child was about to lose his life and you didn't even know?" He replied, "Woe to you! If I was to divert my attention in ṣalāt I would be breaking my ṣalāt."

Many incidents of this kind are narrated in *Ḥakayāt al-Ṣahāba*. What need did the Companions ﷺ have for spiritual practices and exercises when they already had reached the level of, 'that you worship Allah ﷻ as if you are seeing Him?'

My respected, Shaikh Yūsuf also narrated many incidents in his excellent book *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥāba* under the chapter of 'The reality of faith.' The first incident of this chapter begins with the story of Ḥārith ibn Mālik ؓ who was once praying ṣalāt in the masjid. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ entered the masjid and nudged him with his foot. Ḥārith ؓ raised his head and said, "May my mother and father be sacrificed for you, what is it O Blessed Prophet ﷺ?" The Blessed Prophet ﷺ asked, "What condition did you wake up in this morning?" He said, "O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, I woke up in the state of being a believer." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ asked, "What is the reality of what you just said?" He replied, "I turned myself away from the world, spent the whole day thirsty [fasting], and stayed awake the whole night. I see the throne of my Creator and I also see the dwellers of Paradise visiting each other and the dwellers of the Hellfire spiteful of each other."

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "You are a man whose heart Allah ﷻ has enlightened. You have gnosis of Allah ﷻ."

## ENDNOTES

1 Ibn Ḥabbān, *Wafātuhū Ṣalla Allāh 'Alaih wa Sallam* | Ibn Māja, *Dhikr Wafātihī Ṣalla Allāh 'Alaih wa Sallam*

2 Muslim, *Faḍl Dawām al-Dhikr*

3 Muwaṭṭa', *al-Naẓar fi al-Ṣalāḥ*

4 Ibid

الحادي عشر

Chapter Eleven

# The Spiritual Exertions of the Sufis

## Spiritual Remedies to Help Attain Iḥsān

*As* Shaikh Rashid Aḥmad Gangohī previously stated, one sitting with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ was sufficient to produce the attribute of iḥsān. As the rift [in time] between the community and the Blessed Prophet ﷺ grew, the attainment of iḥsān became a difficult aspiration, and the sufis were required to devise spiritual remedies to help acquire it.

In *Shifā al-ʿAlīl* [translation of *al-Qaul al-Jamīl*], Shaikh Nawāb Qutb al-Dīn comments:

> By his unparalleled examination of the subject and his passionate discussions, the author [Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī] has removed the objections of the feebleminded. Some say that since the methods and exercises of the Qādiriyya, Chishtiyya, and Naqshbandiyya paths are nowhere to be seen in the time of the Companions ﷺ or First Successors, therefore they are evil innovations. The summary of his response is simple. The reason spiritual mentors devised these methods was to attain a quality that existed in the time of the prophethood. However, the method of attaining this quality [of iḥsān] changed with the times. Thus, the masters of Taṣawwuf did not deviate from the Shariʿa. Just as the four imams established certain principles for deriving legal rulings from the exoteric of the Shariʿa, likewise the

> masters of Taṣawwuf established certain principles to derive from the esoteric of the Shari'a which became known as Taṣawwuf. How can this be called an evil innovation? What a ridiculous claim. Though this much can be said that the Companions ﷺ were not in need of such exercises because they acquired the quality of iḥsān from the Blessed Prophet ﷺ himself. The people after them, however, were required to devise certain exercises to attain iḥsān because of the distance in time between the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and them. It is similar to how the Companions ﷺ did not need Arabic syntax or Arabic morphology to understand the Qur'an while non-Arabs and the Arabs of today cannot understand the Qur'an without these sciences.

Nawāb Qutb al-Dīn Khān Dehlawī explains with an example in his footnotes on *al-Qaul al-Jamīl*. He writes:

> When the sun rises a person can read without the need of artificial light; but when it sets, one is in need of artificial light. In the time of the Companions ﷺ, it was as if the sun was out; they weren't forced to perform certain exercises to achieve consciousness of Allah ﷻ. This was achieved by one sitting with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, a beautiful quality that cannot be achieved in many months in our times. Now, as the sun has set, certain exercises are required to achieve iḥsān.

After this, Shāh Walī Allāh says:

> I heard from my blessed father who often mentioned seeing 'Alī ﷺ, Ḥasan ﷺ, and Ḥussain ﷺ in his dream. 'I asked 'Alī ﷺ, is our nisba the same as yours in the time of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ?' 'Alī ﷺ asked me to go into a state of absorption. After meditating for some time, he said, 'It is the same without any difference.'[1]

## SPIRITUAL STATES

Then one should know that whoever maintains this nisba will reach lofty states. Sometimes he will reach one type while at other times another. One should appreciate these ethereal states and know that such temporal

spiritual states are signs of the acceptance of one's good deeds. One of these temporal spiritual states is to be steadfast in performing good deeds, giving priority of the commandments of Allah ﷻ over all other things and being diligent in this matter. Therefore, Imam Mālik narrated in his *Muwaṭṭa'* from 'Abd Allāh ibn Bakr that Abū Abū Ṭalḥa Anṣārī ﵁ would pray ṣalāt in his garden [this incident has already past]. After this he says, "The story of Sulaimān ﵇ mentioned in the aya:

فَطَفِقَ مَسْحًا بِالسُّوقِ وَالْأَعْنَاقِ

*And he started passing his hands over the necks and hamstrings* [*of the horses*].[2]

is a well-known incident."

Shaikh Nawāb Qutb al-Dīn writes:

> In brief, what happened was that once Sulaīmān ﵇ became so busy inspecting his horses that the sun set and he missed his 'Aṣr ṣalāt. Sulaimān ﵇ ordered, 'Cut the necks and hamstrings of the horses.'

In essence, following the commandments of Allah ﷻ supersedes everything else for the righteous. If anything impedes the path of fulfilling the commandments of Allah ﷻ, the *ghaira* [towards Allah ﷻ] of the righteous ones begs that it be removed immediately. Therefore, Abū Ṭalḥa Anṣārī ﵁ gave away his beautiful garden and Sulaimān ﵇ cut down his horses.

In *Bayān al-Qur'an*, Shaikh Thānwī writes under the aya:

فَطَفِقَ مَسْحًا بِالسُّوقِ وَالْأَعْنَاق

*And he started passing his hands over the necks and hamstrings* [*of the horses*].[3]

> This incident is worth remembering. When the robust horses that were trained in the path of Allah ﷻ were presented to him he became so engrossed in their inspection that he didn't realize the day was over. He missed some of his daily routine of voluntary ṣalāts

> [narration of 'Alī ﵁ in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*]. Though his servants knew his routine, none had the courage to bring it to his attention because of his imposing character [narration of Ibn 'Abbās ﵁]. However, when he realized it himself he said, 'Woe to me that I became forgetful of my Creator because of my love for wealth. He then ordered his attendants to bring the horses back in his presence. He unsheathed his sword and began cutting them down at the neck and hamstrings [narration of Ḥasan ﵁ in *al-Durr al-Manthūr*]. In Taṣawwuf terminology, this is called *ghaira* which means eliminating anything that hinders the remembrance of Allah ﷾.

Then he [Shāh Walī Allāh] says:

> And one of the lofty states is fear of Allah ﷾ that manifests in the limbs and body. The memorizers of hadith narrate a hadith that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, 'Ten people will be placed underneath the shade of His throne, the fifth being one who remembered Allah ﷾ in a desolate place and tears flowed from his eyes.'[4] In another hadith, once 'Uthmān ﵁ cried profusely while standing before a grave. It is also narrated in a hadith that one could hear a sound like the simmering of food [in a pot] from the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ chest when he prayed his nightly ṣalāt.[5]

Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz says, "In one hadith it is narrated that one who cries from fear of Allah ﷾ will not enter into the Hellfire until milk reenters the udder.[6] Abū Bakr ﵁ was one who cried profusely. He could never stop crying when he recited the Qur'an. Jubair ibn Muṭ'im ﵁ said, 'When I heard the aya:

أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ

*Is it that they are created by none, or are they themselves the creators?*[7]

from the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, I felt as if my heart burst [from my chest] from fear of Allah ﷾.'"[8]

## ADJUSTING SPIRITUAL REMEDIES TO THE TIMES

There are many sayings of the earlier and later scholars about the spiritual exertions that they are not objectives themselves. The true objective is attaining the level of iḥsān. In the process of attaining iḥsān, a seeker is treated according to the spiritual illness that prevents him from attaining iḥsān. Furthermore, every nation develops its own culture and every culture breeds its own spiritual illnesses. Therefore, the spiritual masters of the time will prescribe treatments accordingly. When innovations increased, the spiritual masters added the statement "to save oneself from innovation" in their baiʿa the way the Blessed Prophet ﷺ sometimes added "and to never ask anyone for anything" or occasionally "to never wail." Likewise, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ prescribed specific rulings for different Companions ﵃. In *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, Sufyān ibn ʿAbd Allāh ﵁ once asked the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, "O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, tell me something inclusive and concise in Islam that I never need to ask anyone again?" The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, "Say 'I believe in Allah ﷻ' and hold strong to this."

In another narration, Abū Amāma ﵁ narrates, "A person asked the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, 'What is faith?' The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, 'When your good deeds makes you happy and your bad deeds make you sad, you are a believer.'"[9] Once ʿAmr ibn ʿAnbasa ﵁ asked, "What is faith?" The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, "To be patient [with what you do not have] and to be generous [with what you do]." In the same hadith he was asked, "What is the highest level of Islam?" The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, "Good habits."[10] When Muādh ibn Jabal ﵁ asked a similar question the Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, "that you die in the state that your tongue is busy in the remembrance of Allah ﷻ."[11]

In another narration ʿAbd Allāh ibn Busr ﵁ narrates, "A person asked the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, 'O Prophet, there are so many rules of Islam, tell me one that I may hold on to tightly.' The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, 'Keep your tongue busy in the remembrance of Allah ﷻ.'"[12]

In another narration, Abū Huraira ﵁ says, "A person asked the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, 'Give me advice?' The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, 'Do not be angry.'[13] He asked again, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied the same again. And then, each time he repeated his question the Blessed Prophet ﷺ gave the same reply. In another narration, Abū Ayyūb Anṣārī ﵁ narrates, "A man asked, 'Give me some short advice?' The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied,

'Pray ṣalāt as if it is your last, do not say something you will feel regretful for afterwards, and do not hope for that which is in the hands of others.'"[14]

In essence, these narrations illustrate that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ customized his answers to the person he was addressing based on his specific situation. Likewise, the wordings the spiritual masters of Sulūk use or the clauses they include in the standard baiʿa depends on the person who is taking baiʿa with them. It also depends on the culture they grew up and lived in, and the area they are from. In areas where people are accustomed to simulated funeral processions [*tʿazia*] the spiritual masters include the words, "repentance from simulated funeral processions."

When a virus afflicts people in different regions, sometimes a 'hot' medicine is suitable for people of one region while 'cold' medicines for people of another. Two patients sometimes have the same problem but the physician prescribes two different medicines, even though the objective in both cases is the same: to cure the patient. Similarly, the treatments of homeopaths and medical physicians vary, but their objective is the same.

Likewise, the temporal spiritual states of the Chishtiyya and Naqshbandiyya paths are different because they prescribe treatments according to their methodologies. All these spiritual exertions [regardless of whether it is according to the Chishtiyya or Naqshbandiyya methodology] are treatments for the same spiritual sicknesses. Thus, to demand where such a method is found in the Qur'an and hadith is like asking a physician where is proof in the hadith to prescribe *gule banafshā* [a traditional herb] for colds. It is like asking a physician, "Which aya of the Qur'an and which hadith prove the use of penicillin for infections?" When a person gets sick and a physician prescribes something for him, it becomes incumbent on the patient to take that medicine. In fact, the scholars even permit the use of a forbidden medicine for treating an illness. If a morsel of food gets stuck in one's throat and nothing except alcohol is at hand, it becomes obligatory on this person to take the alcohol to save his life. The idea is the same with spiritual sicknesses.

## THE MEANING OF INNOVATION IN DĪN

If the spiritual 'physicians' prescribe something for a spiritual sickness, none has the right to ask whether or not this is from the Qur'an and Sunna. Whoever says it is an innovation does not know the meaning

of innovation. Innovation is the name of an "innovation in Dīn" not an "innovation for Dīn." People unable to differentiate between the two have no understanding of the Dīn. "Innovation for Dīn" is so important it sometimes becomes necessary. For example, in the past they used swords, bows, and arrows in wars, but using them today for that purpose is ludicrous. It is necessary to be equipped with guns, tanks, and modern weaponry if one is to be victorious.

## THE DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL STATES

Shaikh Mujaddid writes in one of his letters:[15]

> You wrote that you were uninformed about the special nisba of your mentor [Shaikh Bāqī Billa] and even asked about it. Listen my friend; these types of questions are not advisable in writing or even orally. Who knows [after reading the reply] what others will make of it and deduce from it. In order to understand the nisba of the shaikh, one must stay in their company for a considerable period of time and not be skeptical of them, i.e. they must be held in the highest regard. Every question, whatever it may be, deserves an answer, therefore, I will tell you this much: that every perpetual spiritual state is unique in the effects it produces, i.e. the changes it produces in the heart and the actions. Each perpetual spiritual state is characterized by a type of gnosis, spiritual realizations, temporal spiritual states, and feelings. The most appropriate worship for one perpetual state may be dhikr and concentration on Allah ﷻ [*tawajju*] while for another recitation of Qur'an and ṣalāt. Also, one perpetual state may be reached through the bestowal of Allah ﷻ [jadhb] while another through Sulūk. A third type of perpetual state may be reached through a combination of both while another is totally independent of both, i.e. it has no relation with Sulūk or jadhb. This perpetual state, however, is rare; it was the state of the Companions رضي الله عنهم. Anyone who possesses this perpetual state is of the most excellent character. The holders of this perpetual state have little resemblance to the holders of other perpetual states, unlike the other perpetual states which are similar to each other in one way or another. Few of the spiritual masters of the three paths i.e., Chishtiyya, Naqshbandiyya, and Qādiriyya, claim to have ever attained this perpetual state, that is to say that

few can communicate the spiritual experiences and gnosis that is attained in this perpetual state.

ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَاءُ

The Companions ﷺ attained this powerful nisba and peaked in it within the first few moments of staying in the company of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. Anyone else would be forced to tread the path of Sulūk or jadhb, gain knowledge, and gnosis, before attaining this nisba of the Companions ﷺ. The attainment of this nisba so quickly is the exclusive trait of the companionship [*ṣuḥba*] of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. However, it is possible to attain this lofty nisba in the same manner and as quickly as the Companions ﷺ if one sits in the company of one who has gained this blessing.

As it is necessary to consult physicians for physical illnesses because no one reads medical books to treat oneself, likewise it is necessary to consult spiritual physicians for spiritual illnesses. As many imams came who established principles and derived rulings accordingly from the Qur'an and Sunna, likewise many spiritual masters of Sulūk came who developed methodologies for Taṣawwuf. As there were many mujtahids for the exoteric of the Shari'a, likewise there were many spiritual masters for the esoteric of the Shari'a; and as the exoteric of Shari'a became confined to four imams likewise, for many reasons, the spiritual masters of Taṣawwuf became confined [within most of the Muslim world] to four paths: the Qādiriyya, Chishtiyya, Suhrwardiyya, and Naqshbandiyya.

## ENDNOTES

1 *al-Durr al-Thamīn*, pg 61

2 38:33

3 38:33

4 Baihaqī, *Faḍl al-Ṣalāt bi al-Jamā'a* | Tirmidhī, *al-Ḥubb fi Allāh*

5 Ibn Ḥabbān, *Qirā'at al-Qur'an* | Nisā'ī , *al-Bukā' fi al-Ṣalāt*

6 Tirmidhī, *Faḍl hg-Ghubār fi Sabīl Allāh*

7 52:35

8 *Mu'jam al-Kabīr*, 2/141

9 Ibn Ḥabbān, *Farḍ al-Īmān*

10 *Shu'b al-Īmān*, 6/242

11 Ibn Ḥabbān, *Adkhār*

12 *al-Mu'jam al-Ausaṭ*, 2/374

13 Bukhārī, *al-Ḥadhar min al-Gaḍab*

14 *Musnad Aḥmad*, 38/434

15 *Tajaliyyāt al-Rabbānī*

الثّاني عشر

Chapter Twelve

# The Need for a Mentor and the Necessary Conditions for Becoming a Mentor

## Two Conditions for a Mentor: Piety and Competence

*In al-Takashshuf,* Shaikh Thānwī writes:

> One should know that it is necessary for one who treats an illness to himself be healthy and also competent enough to treat others. As the saying goes, 'the opinion of a weak person is weak' [*ra'ya al-'alīl 'alīl*]. Therefore, if he is a physician, but is sick, his opinion will be of little value. Likewise, if he is healthy but incompetent, he cannot help anyone though he is in good health.
>
> Likewise, in the treatment of spiritual ailments, a good spiritual mentor is required i.e. one who is God-fearing, and not a transgressor or an innovator in Dīn. He should also be competent enough to help others attain iḥsān. If this person is corrupt in his beliefs or actions [i.e., he is amongst the innovators or transgressors] it is only fair to conclude that he will not be any good for his [spiritual] students in matters of Dīn. In fact, it is most likely he will try to proselyte the seeker; and then if he is not practicing his Dīn what is the likelihood he will guide his student toward good deeds? He will say to himself,

'What will he think of me if he sees that I do not practice upon what I preach?' If anything, he will justify his actions to appear righteous before his students, and this is a major source of misguidance. Second, his teachings will not be illuminated with light, blessings, or the divine help of Allah ﷻ. If this spiritual mentor is God-fearing and pious, but does not possess the necessary skills to instruct the students in spiritual matters, he will be unable to help the seeker in his affairs.

How do we recognize a true physician? If he is accredited, has completed his residency, people come to him for treatment, and many of them are nursed back to health. Likewise, the signs of a true spiritual mentor are that he has spent a considerable amount of time with and benefited from a recognized mentor; the scholars and people of intelligence think highly of him, come to him in times of need; and feel an increase in love of Allah ﷻ and decrease in love of the material world when sitting in his presence; and the situation of those who sit in his company is continually progressing. When one observes all these signs in a person, then he is worthy of being made a spiritual mentor. He should consider him a panacea for his spiritual ailments and believe that visiting and being in the service of such a person is a great honor. Thus, a complete overview of the characteristics of a spiritual mentor is:

- he is God-fearing and pious
- he is a follower of the Sunna
- knows a sufficient amount of the knowledge of Dīn
- has remained in the company of a recognized mentor
- the scholars and intelligent people are inclined towards him
- his company is efficacious
- the seekers are improving in his company.

## CONDITIONS FOR BEING A MENTOR

In *al-Qaul al-Jamīl*, Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī established stricter conditions for being a spiritual mentor, the summary being mentioned in *Shifā al-ʿAlīl*. Below, is a list of some of these conditions:

1. Knowledge of the Qur'an and hadith, and this does not mean comprehensive knowledge of the Qur'an, but sufficient enough that he has understood the Qur'an through study of the exegesis like *Tafsīr al-Madārik* or *Jalālain* or some other voluminous or summarized exegesis. It is also important that he has studied the said exegesis from a learned scholar. He should also be knowledgeable in the field of aḥādīth and have studied *Kitāb al-Maṣābīḥ* or *Mashāriq* and knows the opinions of the scholars on the different aḥādīth.

The translator [of *al-Qaul al-Jamīl*], Shaikh Nawāb Qutb al-Dīn, says that the condition 'knows the opinions of the scholars' is to know that any opinion aside from the opinions of the four imams is a deviation and against the consensus of the community. Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz says that, 'one who is informed of the position of scholars fulfills the condition of having sufficient knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunna.'

After this, Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī reminds us that the condition for the mentor to be a scholar is that the purpose of bai'a itself is to guide the seeker towards goodness and prohibit him from wrongful things, to break his bad habits and to imbue in him good ones. And then the most important is to have the seeker retain these good habits and practice them in all the different aspects mentioned above. Thus, how can a spiritual mentor who is not a scholar and does not possess the knowledge of good and bad, right and wrong, be able to guide a seeker to the right path?

Shaikh Nawāb Qutb al-Dīn says:

> *Subḥān Allāh*! Look at how the situation has changed in our times. The pseudo-sufis of today are obsessed with the notion that knowledge is unnecessary in Taṣawwuf and, in fact, think it is a hurdle in this path. They say that Shari'a is one thing and Taṣawwuf is another. How can they say such a thing when all one finds in the books of the past sufis like *Qūt al-Qulūb*, *'Awārif*, *Iḥyā al-'Ulūm*, *Kīmiyā-e-Sa'ādat*, *Futūḥ al-Ghaib*, and *Ghaniyyat al-Ṭālibīn* is that Shari'a is a condition for Taṣawwuf? Even ignorance cringes at such examples of grave ignorance. They don't even know what is written in the books of the sufis whose names they chant more than they recite the Qur'an and who they talk about night and day.

Shaikh Nawāb Qutb al-Dīn writes in a footnote:

> It says, in the book *Taṣawwuf-e-Muḥammudī'* that the father of the sufis, Shaikh Junaid Baghdādī says:
>
> > Whoever has not memorized the Qur'an and written aḥādīth cannot be followed in Taṣawwuf because this path and knowledge of ours is mutually intertwined with the Qur'an and Sunna.

Another one of his sayings is, "Any Taṣawwuf which opposes the Shari'a is disbelief."

Sirrī Saqṭī said, "Taṣawwuf is the name of three qualities:

1. The light of gnosis does not extinguish the light of taqwā.
2. One does not speak the secrets of the inner [the spiritual states and celestial shapes etc.] if they violate the explicit meanings of the Qur'an.
3. The supernatural wonders of a person do not transgress the prohibitions of Allah ﷻ.

Many other sayings of the famous friends of Allah ﷻ are mentioned in *Jāmi' al-Tafāsīr*.

Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī continues:

> Then, the spiritual mentor must be one who has remained in the company of the God-fearing scholars, learned the proprieties from them, and diligently studied the lawful and unlawful. He trembles in fear when he hears the orders and prohibitions from the Qur'an and Sunna, and transforms his sayings, actions, and his whole life in accordance with the Qur'an and Sunna. If a spiritual mentor is not a scholar it is expected of him to possess as much knowledge as is necessary to ensure he leads his life according to the Qur'an and Sunna.

2. The second condition is that he must have probity ['*adāla*] and taqwā. It is incumbent upon him to abstain from major sins and to continuously refrain from minor ones.

Shāh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz says:

> Taqwā is a condition for the spiritual mentor because the purpose behind bai‘a is to purify the heart. Humans are naturally inclined to adopt the ways and habits of those in whose company they sit. In matters of Taṣawwuf, words without actions will not do. Therefore, a spiritual mentor who is not characterized by good morals and good deeds and who only talks and delivers speeches has not understood the purpose of bai‘a.

3. The third condition is that he strives for the Hereafter and abstains from the allures of the material world. He is steadfast in practicing the emphasized Sunnas and the different dhikrs narrated in the authentic aḥādīth. His heart is connected with Allah ﷾ and he possesses the gift of perpetual awareness of Allah ﷾.

4. The fourth condition is that he only orders what is permissible and prohibits what is forbidden. He is strong of opinion and not wishy-washy, trying to please everyone. He is also extremely intelligent and one who can be trusted.

5. The fifth condition is that he has stayed in the company of a genuine mentor and learned the proprieties from him for a lengthy period of time. He has gained light of the heart and tranquility from him. The company of the friends of Allah ﷾ is necessary because it is the way of Allah ﷾ that one cannot acquire something unless he is in the company of those who already possess it. So, a person cannot truly gain knowledge unless he sits with the scholars, and likewise can be said of every skill; one cannot be a blacksmith until he learns from a blacksmith and a carpenter unless he spends time with a carpenter.

It is not necessary that the spiritual mentor is able to perform miraculous deeds or that he does not work [i.e., have a job]. This is because miraculous acts are the result of exhaustive spiritual exercises. They are not a sign of genuineness in the spiritual mentor, and to leave one's work or occupation is against the Shari‘a. One should not be deceived by the dervishes who are overwhelmed by their spiritual states and do not try to make a living; their lifestyle cannot be taken as evidence of permissibility to withdraw from worldly life and from making a living. Islam teaches

us to be content with whatever we have, to be careful of how we earn our wealth, to avoid unlawful and doubtful wealth and a job that is forbidden [but not to withdraw from the worldly life].

Shāh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz says:

> It is not necessary for a spiritual mentor to lead a monastic life or devote himself to harsh and difficult conditions and devotions like perpetual fasting, spending the night in ṣalāt, practicing celibacy, avoiding delectable foods, and running off into the jungle or mountains, as many people of our time think is required to be a true sufi. This is because these acts fall under extremism in Dīn [*tashaddud fi al-Dīn*], and hardship on the self [*tashaddud ʿala al-nafs*] is not permissible. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "One is never radical in Dīn but that he becomes subdued by it."[1] He also said, "Monasticism has no place in Islam."[2]

## EXERTIONS OF PAST MENTORS

The conditions put by Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī for a spiritual mentor are comparatively harsher than those put by Shaikh Thānwī. Before Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī, the elders put their students through strict measures and harsh conditions before granting them successorship. This is known to any one who has read the biographies of the friends of Allah ﷻ. The story of Shāh Abū Saʿīd Gangohī is well known and I have narrated it in many of my booklets. In summary, the story is that he went to Shāh Nizām al-Dīn Balkhī. When Shāh Nizām al-Dīn learned that his mentor's grandson is about to arrive, he set out to receive him from one of the stations. Shāh Nizām al-Dīn showed him the utmost respect and returned with him to Balkh. He sat him on an elevated place and himself sat in the servants area. When Shāh Abū Saʿīd asked permission to leave, Shāh Nizām al-Dīn placed a gift of gold coins at his feet. Then Abū Saʿīd said, "Shaikh, I do not need these worldly things nor have I come here for this purpose. I want the [spiritual] wealth which you came and took from us."[3] No sooner had said this that Shāh Nizām al-Dīn completely changed his attitude. He said harshly, "Go to the barn and prepare food for the hunting dogs."

Thus, he was placed in charge of watching over the hunting dogs, and washing them, bathing them, and keeping them clean. Sometimes he was told to blow into the fires [to warm the water for the bathrooms] and at

other times to accompany his mentor on his hunting trips, holding the leashes of the hunting dogs while the Shaikh rode his horse. One of the servants was instructed, "Give the servant who lives in the barn two pieces of barley bread twice a day from the house." Now whenever Shāh Abū Saʿīd came in the presence of Shāh Nizām al-Dīn, he would not look up at Shāh Abū Saʿīd. He told Shāh Abū Saʿīd to sit far from him and refused to acknowledge his presence when he came in.

Once the Shaikh ordered the cleaning lady to purposely drop some garbage over him and note his reaction. When she passed by and purposely slipped some garbage over him he grew red with anger and said, "I would have showed you if we were in Gangoh." The cleaning lady informed the Shaikh of Shāh Abū Saʿīd's response. The Shaikh said, "There is still some odor of arrogance in him." Two months later, the Shaikh ordered the cleaning lady to do the same again. This time he [Shāh Abū Saʿīd] only glared at her then quietly lowered his head. When the cleaning lady came and told the Shaikh, "Today, he did not say a thing. He glared at me and then lowered his head." The Shaikh said, "There is still some odor left." After a few months, he ordered the cleaning lady to "Throw a whole basket of cow dung on him until he is covered in it from head to toe." But now Shāh Abū Saʿīd was spiritually purified. When she came and threw the whole basket over him, he stood up concerned and said humbly, "The poor woman hit me accidentally and fell. Tell me, are you okay? Are you hurt anywhere?" He then scooped up all the cow dung with his hands saying, "Here let me put this back in for you," and carefully put it back in the basket. The cleaning lady narrated the whole incident and said in astonishment, "Today, instead of getting angry, Shāh Ṣāḥib pitied me and scooped up all the dung and put it in the basket." The Shaikh said, "Now he is rectified."

Later that day, Shāh Nizām al-Dīn sent a servant to Shāh Abū Saʿīd, "Today we will go hunting, prepare the dogs for the trip." In the evening, the Shaikh rode out into the jungle with his servants. Fragile and sickly, Shāh Abū Saʿīd was guiding the well-fed hunting dogs by their leashes. He tied the leashes to his waist and tried to hold them back but fell and was dragged on the jungle floor. Branches, thorns, and rocks bruised and cut his body, but not a sound came from his mouth. When the other servants pulled in the dogs and raised him to his feet he was trembling from fear that, "The Shaikh will be angry with me," and will say "You didn't follow my orders! Why didn't you control the dogs?" But the Shaikh was only testing him and this he had done.

That night Shāh Nizām al-Dīn saw his spiritual mentor Shaikh ʿAbd al-Quddūs [Shāh Abū Saʿīd's grandfather] in his dream. He [Shāh ʿAbd

al-Quddūs] said to him sadly, "Nizām al-Dīn, I didn't put you through as many exertions as you put my children through." Early the next morning Shāh Nizām al-Dīn called Shāh Abū Sa'īd from the barn and hugged him. He then said, "I brought with me the bountiful blessings of the Chistiyya family from India, and you are now taking it back. May Allah ﷻ bless you, you may now go home." Thus, he granted Shāh Abū Sa'īd successorship and sent him back to India.

This story is summarized, the original being much longer. Many famous stories of spiritual exertions of this kind are found in the books of history, but our physical strength has given away and we do not have the faith of our predecessors. Therefore, the spiritual masters after Shaikh Thānwī have become very lenient in this matter. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said to the Companions ﷁ,

إِنَّكُمْ فِيْ زَمَانٍ مَنْ تَرَكَ مِنْكُمْ عُشْرَ مَا أُمِرَ بِهِ هَلَكَ ثُمَّ يَأْتِيْ زَمَانٌ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْهُمْ بِعُشْرِ مَا أُمِرَ بِهِ نَجَا

> You live in a time that one will be ruined if he **does not fulfill** a tenth of **what is required of him**, but a time will come when a person will be saved if he performs one tenth of **what is required of him**.[4]

In his commentary of *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, Mulla 'Alī Qārī writes "what is required" in the aforementioned hadith refers to enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.

I [Shaikh Zakariyyā] think it is a general statement and refers to all the commandments of Dīn. By 'does not fulfill' is meant lack of concentration and iḥsān. In a hadith of *Abū Dāwūd*, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "A person prays ṣalāt and one tenth the reward of ṣalāt is written for him while for others, up to half the reward of ṣalāt."[5] This deficiency is because of a lack of concentration and submissiveness in ṣalāt.

Due to weakness in our faith and our inability to tolerate physical hardship, the spiritual masters have reduced the amount and intensity of the spiritual exertions and likewise the conditions for being a spiritual mentor. This topic is lengthy and though I feel like writing more on it, who is going to read it? Therefore, I shall stop writing.

## THE TRAGEDY OF TAṢAWWUF TERMINOLOGIES AND OBJECTIVES

Shaikh Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī Nadwī wrote a superb introduction to the book, *Akābir kā Sulūk aur Iḥsān* [by Sufi Iqbāl in Urdu]. I will reproduce it here and finish the chapter with his words. He says:

> When reading history, two common problems are faced by people in the field of [Islamic] ethics, academics, and the [Islamic] sciences and arts:
>
> 1. When the ways or methods by which objectives are achieved become objectives themselves
> 2. When terminologies inhibit understanding of realities
>
> These methods and terminologies are extremely important. They are not accessories to the objectives, but rather evolve from them. Without them, these exalted objectives could not be propagated or understood. Despite their importance though, terminologies or methodologies are never objectives, but rather agents in achieving the objectives. They are used temporarily for the attainment of the objectives and are occasionally emphasized more than the objectives they promote. However, when an expert in any field or science deems it appropriate, he will not only filter the terminologies and methodologies from the objectives, but even eliminate them completely. The expert will also try to maintain equilibrium between the terminologies and methodologies inhibiting the path to the objectives and guiding towards them. But one matter that must be understood is that this difficult stage came upon every exalted objective. In such cases, the methods often became the objectives and the terminologies began inhibiting the path to realization and achievement of the objectives and its realities.
>
> Sometimes the objectives fade into the background as our emphasis on the terminology increases, but worse than that, bitter experiences with standard-bearers of these terminologies and their misuse of these terminologies lead to gross misunderstandings about the objectives. A great swath of people become so distrustful of these objectives, that convincing them of their greatness has become an arduous task. When you talk to them about the importance of acquiring

these objectives or try to remove their doubts about them, the methodologies which self-styled claimants have exaggerated and insisted upon, engulf them. These self-styled claimants became so obsessed with the methodologies that the objectives themselves are forgotten.

Likewise, terminologies become an obstruction when people are called to the realities that are self-evident and in which there is no second opinion. The reality of such terminologies is that they evolve in certain conditions and circumstances; unlike the realities they serve, they are disposable and allow for a difference of opinion. They were devised to bring certain profound realities to the mind in a timed-release manner [so as to not immediately overburden the mind with heavy and deep concepts] and with certain objectives in the minds of their creators. The first standard-bearers of these realities, whose lives were a living example of them, had no knowledge of these terminologies. They explained and implanted these realities in the consciousness of the people using different words, methods and styles. From Arabic morphology, Arabic syntax, the principles of fiqh, Arabic linguistics and rhetoric to purification of the heart and gnosis of Allah ﷻ, one who studies the history of these fields will learn that the earlier scholarship was different in many respects from later works. It will become clear that the earlier scholars were independent of these methodologies and thus were in control of their field. The later scholars, on the other hand, were dependent on the terminologies and thus controlled by them. The authorities in these fields are the true propagators of the realities while the self-styled experts prisoners and worshippers of the terminologies. In arts, academics, and ethics, the exalted objectives are and always have been a tribulation for their seekers throughout the centuries.

Taṣawwuf suffers the same problem. The objectives and realities of Taṣawwuf are an undeniable truth, but its terminologies and methodologies have becomes its greatest obstruction. The first obstruction came by overuse of the methodology and the second by overemphasis on the terminology.

Are good morals and sincerity important or not? Is increasing the faith to the level of certainty good or not? What about attaining virtuous qualities and eliminating wicked ones? What about being saved from jealousy, hatred, keeping a grudge, love of wealth, love of the self, and other immoral traits? Is liberation from the clutches of the lower self that incites towards evil good or not? What about concentration in ṣalāt, crying in humbleness to Allah ﷻ in

supplication, and vigilance over the lower self? What about the most essential qualities for a believer like love for Allah ﷻ and his Blessed Prophet ﷺ? How about physically tasting the sweetness of love of Allah ﷻ and his Blessed Prophet ﷺ or in the least, to strive and work towards attaining love of Allah ﷻ and his Blessed Prophet ﷺ; being honest in relations and transactions; truthfulness and trustworthiness; concern for fulfilling the rights of others; being in control of the lower self; self-control which prevents irrational behavior like exploding into a rage? Are these not traits we should strive to attain?

Every decent and good-natured person, and especially a Muslim who does not have the blindfold of prejudice over his eyes will tell you the same thing: that these qualities are not only good, but are actually objectives of the Shari'a and that the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunna encourage us to attain these qualities. However, the moment it is explained to them that these qualities can be attained through a field known by the name of Taṣawwuf, they will become upset. This is because of their repugnance for the terminology and also because of their observations and bitter experiences with the claimants and standard-bearers of this terminology. When the term is uttered, it revives their bad experiences with such claimants and their personal observations of them. But this is not a problem of Taṣawwuf only. It is common to every field and art, for every revivalist movement and every pure and sincere objective. They have their share of true workers and propagators as well as claimants and pretenders. There are the genuine and the counterfeit, the masters and the self-styled experts, the experienced and the inexperienced, and the truthful and the hypocrites amongst them. However, an intelligent person will not reject the objective, field, or art on the basis of this dichotomy. The same goes for worldly matters like business, farming, or a skill; there are the good and experienced and also the bad and inexperienced among them. But the way Allah ﷻ runs the system of this world and His Dīn is that people take what they need. The pretenders do not prevent true seekers from achieving their objectives, nor does a misunderstanding of the terminology turn those in search of the truth away from the reality.

There are two groups in regards to Taṣawwuf. The first group accepts the different aspects of Taṣawwuf, but rejects it when they are incorporated under this name. Some of the objectives and characteristics we mentioned earlier are examples of goals/aims accepted by all in their individual form, but when incorporated under the name

of Taṣawwuf, the first group is repulsed by it and says, "We don't believe in Taṣawwuf; it is the source of corruption."

The second group accepts the reality of Taṣawwuf but only when it is given a different name. For example, if they are told that the Qur'anic term for this reality is purification of the heart [*tazkiyya*], iḥsān in the aḥādīth, and jurisprudence of the esoteric [*fiqh al-bāṭin*] in the words of later scholars, they say, "There is no reason to disagree with it and it is from the Qur'an and hadith."

The problem is that the term Taṣawwuf cannot be eliminated from the books nor can we expect people to forget their ways [i.e. habit of usage of the term Taṣawwuf] ['ways of the people' is also referred to as the manifestation of Allah ﷻ's voice because Allah ﷻ makes Himself heard through people], otherwise if we had our way we would call it iḥsān and *tazkiyya* and would do away with the name Taṣawwuf. However, this name has become the convention and as often observed in different fields [history is full of such examples], the conventional name of a field predominates over its original name.

The masters of each field always emphasized the objectives and kept the methodology secondary to them. Likewise, they boldly rejected those elements which harmed the spirit of the respective field and its sublime objectives. In every era in the history of Islam, the teachers, propagators, and people of knowledge separated the flesh from the shell, the realities from the imaginary, and the objectives from the customs. From Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī and Shaikh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrwardī to Mujadid Alf-e-Thānī, Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī, Sayyid Aḥmad Shāhīd, Shaikh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī, and Shaikh Ashraf 'Alī Thānwī; they all emphasized the need to distinguish non-objectives from objectives and to separate the flesh from its shell. They also forcefully rebutted the customs and rituals that seeped in through mixing with Hindus and false sufis and which people eventually came to believe in as the pillars of Taṣawwuf. Whether it is Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī's *Futūḥ al-Ghaib* and *Ghaniyyat al-Ṭālibīn*, Shaikh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrwardī's *'Awārif al-Ma'ārif*, Shaikh Mujadid Alf-e-Thānī's *Maktūbāt-e-Rabbānī*, the work of Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī, Sayyid Aḥmad Shāhīd's *Ṣirāt al-Mustaqīm*, Shaikh Rashīd Gangohī's *Maktūbāt*, or Shaikh Thānwī's *Tarbiyat al-Sālik* and *Qaṣd al-Sabīl*, one finds their articles and writings drawing the line between truth and falsehood. Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī went as far as to say, "The nisba of the sufis is the greatest

blessing, but their customs [which are unproven in the Shari'a] hold no weight." Likewise, every one of these scholars emphasized, without exception, the importance of morals, dealing with others, and fulfilling the rights of others, and made these essential conditions for rectification of the heart and closeness to Allah ﷻ. Their writings consistently emphasized these points and their gatherings were centers for the propagation of this belief.

I found the elders whose time I lived in, whom I was fortunate to meet [and whose lives convinced me of the righteousness of Taṣawwuf], to be more than the embodiment of Taṣawwuf, they were also exemplars of the Shari'a. Their morals mirrored the morals of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ while their actions, their dealings with others, and their entire lives were perfect models of the Shari'a. I always saw them separating the methodologies from the objectives; they downplayed the terminologies, stressed the importance of the realities, ignored the customs, and rebuffed the innovations. Their adherence to the Sunna was not limited to the worship only; it also guided their habits and social dealings. They were not the followers but rather the mujtahids of this path of Taṣawwuf; through their divine intuition and extensive experience they sometimes omitted or added, and selected or summarized the field of Taṣawwuf. They discreetly prescribed treatments according to the attitude and disposition of each seeker, and carefully considered the situation, the personality, and the preoccupations [of the seeker] in the prevention and treatment of spiritual illnesses. They were the founders, the spiritual guides, and the mujtahids of this field; they were the masters of their field, not those who submitted to it. Their main objective was to treat and revive the sick; they were not among those who followed the beaten path and repeated the lessons by rote. In their view, the true objectives of Taṣawwuf included perfecting one's morals, being true and honest in dealings with people, being moderate in disposition and behavior, controlling the lower self, sacrificing for others, submitting and adhering, being sincere, and ultimately attaining the pleasure of Allah ﷻ in everything one did. The dhikr, spiritual exertions, bai'a, and company of the spiritual mentor are pursued to achieve these goals; and if none of these goals are achieved then all these efforts are in vain. [End of Shaikh Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī's quote]

## WHO ARE THE SUFIS?

Everything Shaikh Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī Nadwī said is the truth. The elders [*akābir*] have said the same: that there is no disagreement in the objectives of Taṣawwuf, only that some detest the name of Taṣawwuf. People run from the name of Taṣawwuf. Some of them run because of their ignorance of the objectives and others because of the way the word Taṣawwuf has become associated, in their minds, with wrongful behavior. The whole eleventh volume of Ibn Taimiyya's fatwas is about the subject of Taṣawwuf. He writes:

> The name sufis was not known in the third century but became famous sometime after. This word is found in the writings of the imams and spiritual mentors like Imam Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Abū Sulaimān Dārānī, Sufyān Thaurī, and also Ḥasan Baṣrī. The scholars disagree on the etymology of the word.

After narrating various opinions, he says:

> This word is associated with the wearing of wool [*ṣūf*]. The first appearance of a group of sufis was in the city of Basra and the first to open a sanctum were the students of ʻAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Zaid… and ʻAbd al-Wāhid ibn Zaid was one of the successors of Ḥasan Baṣrī. Of all places, Basra was the city where people were the most austere, pious, and God-fearing and this is how the saying, "Fiqh is a dweller of Kūfa and worship a dweller of Basra" was born.

Then, Ibn Taimiyya narrates various incidents of the sufis of Basra. These incidents explain how some would fall unconscious and sometimes even die while reciting the Qur'an. Some of the elders of the time opposed this type of behavior thinking it was pretentious while others argued it had no precedent in the Companions ﷺ. The view of the majority of scholars is that a person who says or does something while spiritually unconscious cannot be denounced. Though, the person who controls his state and does not fall unconscious is better.When Imam Aḥmad was asked about unconsciousness [*ghashī*] and spiritual ecstasy [*wajd*] he said, "Once when someone recited the Qur'an to Yaḥyā ibn Saʻīd Qaṭṭān, he fell unconscious.

If anyone was able to control himself at such a time it would be Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd because I have never seen anyone as intelligent as him."

It is also narrated about Imam Shāfi'ī that he fell unconscious, and the story of 'Alī ibn Fuḍail ibn Ayyāḍ is also well-known. In brief, these types of incidents also happened with the most respected of the pious predecessors whom we trust in their integrity and piety.

The description of the different states of the Companions ﷺ are mentioned in the Qur'an; these states are higher than those which have been previously mentioned, like the trembling of their hearts and shedding tears, etc. But people whose hearts have hardened and rusted and who have no attachment to Dīn have even objected to this. They are the worst type of people.

On the other hand, there are those who believe they [those who fall unconscious and who cannot keep their bearings] held the most perfect spiritual state. Both these two groups [the ones who object and those who believe they held the most perfect spiritual state] stand in two opposite poles—one in excessiveness [*ifrāṭ*] and the other remissness [*tafrīṭ*]. But if we look further, there are actually three positions in this matter. The first are the transgressors of the self [*ẓālim al-nafs*] who have hardness of heart. They are the people whose hearts are not affected by recitation of Qur'an or by remembrance of Allah ﷻ, and they are like the People of the Book when Allah ﷻ said of them:

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُم

*Then, after that, your hearts were hardened*[6]

The second are the god-fearing believers whose hearts are weak. They cannot withstand the spiritual feelings that overwhelm them [when reciting Qur'an and remembering Allah ﷻ]. They fall unconscious and sometimes die because of the weakness of their heart and the intensity of the descent of a spiritual meaning that overwhelms them.

Such states are not confined to the Dīn only, but can also be observed in matters of the material world, e.g. in extreme joy or grief. There is neither sin for their reaction nor any reason to be doubtful of their condition if there is no deficiency in this respect. "If there is no deficiency" means that he lost consciousness or died from something that was not in violation of the Shari'a, such as listening to recitation of the Qur'an. In this manner, he was overwhelmed by a feeling that is termed intoxication

[*sakr*] and the passing away of the self [*fanā*], or something of that kind by which he fell unconscious involuntarily. His unconsciousness is not objectionable and he is excused if the thing which induced unconsciousness was not forbidden.

The fatwa in this situation is that a person is praiseworthy if these temporal states [*aḥwāl*] are brought on by acts that are not forbidden and in the state that the person is a true believer, but is unable to control himself. Likewise, he is excusable for any condition like that of unconsciousness that befalls him. The people in this class are higher in status than those who do not reach this state because of the weakness of their faith or hardness of their heart. Though they [the ones who fall unconscious] are higher than the people who have hardness of heart or are weak in their faith [and who are not affected by recitation of the Qur'an etc.] they are of a lower and less perfect state than the believers struck by the same exuberant feelings [that lead to unconsciousness] but who keep their bearings and do not fall unconscious. The last type of people [who do not fall unconscious when struck by such exuberant feelings] are the Companions ﷺ and the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ ascended the heavens in the ascension [*mirāj*] and experienced incredible events, but his condition did not change. Thus, the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ spiritual state was better than Musa's ﷺ who fell unconscious after seeing the revelation of Allah ﷻ on Mount Ṭūr. Undoubtedly, the spiritual state of Musa ﷺ was exalted, but the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ was greater and more perfect.

Anyhow, states of this kind, induced by intense fear of Allah ﷻ, first occurred in Basra, and since such people wore wool [*ṣūf*] they became known as the sufis. But their path and ways are in no way symbolized by the wearing of wool; this attribution was only because of their outward appearance. Taṣawwuf to them was the name of some realities and specific spiritual states. They have written much on what it means to be a sufi and the way of life of a sufi. For example, some said a sufi is one who is pure and all impurities have been removed from him; he is perpetually engrossed in the remembrance of Allah ﷻ, and silver, gold, pebbles and dirt are all equal in his sight. Some say Taṣawwuf means hiding spiritual meanings and refraining from making claims. There are many other similar explanations of this kind. These people eventually attain the level of the veracious [*siddiq*] and the veracious ones are the best of creation after the Prophets of Allah ﷻ. They are the very roots of Taṣawwuf. After this, people changed and branched out into three distinct types:

## THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUFIS

The sufis of Good Character [*Ṣufiyyat al-Khalāiq*]: They are the group mentioned above.

The Materialist sufis [*Ṣufiyyat al-Arzāq*]: They live in the sanctum and few of them have knowledge of the realities of Taṣawwuf. For them, there are three conditions:

1. They fulfill the obligations of Dīn and abstain from all prohibited acts.
2. They possess the proprieties of the elders of this path.
3. They do not involve themselves in the material world more than is required. They possess good qualities and do not hoard wealth or commit sins.

Pretenders: They are only sufi by name. Their purpose is nothing more than wearing the dress of the sufis and contriving new things, etc. They are like an ignoramus wearing the dress of a scholar or martyr. They have learned a few words and sayings from here and there and convince people that they are also sufis, though they are nothing of the sort.

## KEY TO PARADISE

Shaikh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrwardī mentions the hadith of Ibn 'Umar ﵄ [in his book] that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Everything has a key and the key to Paradise is love for the downtrodden [*masākīn*]. These people will be in the company of Allah ﷻ on the Day of Judgment."

Thus, dependence on Allah ﷻ [*faqar*] is one major aspect of Taṣawwuf and Taṣawwuf stands on dependence on Allah ﷻ. Shaikh Ruwaim said:

> Taṣawwuf is based on three qualities:
>
> 1. To be imbued with dependence and powerlessness [*iḥtiāj*]
> 2. To spend in the path of Allah ﷻ and to sacrifice for Him
> 3. To refrain from involvement in others' affairs and to abstain from whatever one loves.

Shaikh Junaid was once asked, "What is Taṣawwuf?" He replied, "To establish a direct relationship with Allah ﷻ" and Shaikh Maʿrūf Karkhī said, "Taṣawwuf means to understand the realities and to lose hope in what others have." Therefore, whoever has not attained the quality of dependence on Allah ﷻ, his Taṣawwuf is not true Taṣawwuf. Shaikh Ḥasan Baṣrī said, "I met seventy Companions ﷺ who participated in the battle of Badr who wore *ṣūf* [wool]." [i.e, they depended exclusively on Allah ﷻ]

## ENDNOTES

1 Bukhārī, *al-Dīn Yusr*

2 *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaiba*, 3/270, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, 6/134

3 Shāh Niẓām al-Dīn gained purification of heart from his shaikh who was Shāḥ Abū Saʿīd's grandfather. Shāḥ Abū Saʿīd is now asking Shāh Niẓām al-Dīn to grant him the spiritual wealth he had taken from his grandfather.

4 *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, p. 31

5 Abū Dāwūd, *Mā Jā' fī Nuqṣān al-Ṣalāt*

6 2:72

الثالث عشر

Chapter Thirteen

# Meditative Devotions and Temporal Spiritual States

## PANACEA FOR THE HEART

*The greatest* of all meditative devotions is the dhikr of Allah ﷻ and the greatest of dhikrs is the testament of faith, *lā ilāha illa Allāh*. This is why dhikr is central to all the paths [Chishtiyya, Naqshbandiyya etc.] though the methodology differs amongst them. It is similar to how traditional doctors prescribe different dosages of a medicine with specific instructions. For example, I have observed a strange thing amongst the traditional doctors that a patient is prescribed something by one doctor but does not get better. He goes to another doctor who keeps the same prescription, but makes small changes in the dosage and timing. It is amazing that he became better after a few small changes to the same prescription. I have seen this happen not once but many times.

Below is a letter reproduced from *Tadhkirat al-Rashīd*, in which Shaikh Rashīd Gangohī responds to Shaikh Thānwī [who compared the conditions for permissibility of celebration of the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ birth [*mīlād*] to the restrictions and specifications in meditative devotions {that are means of achieving the nisba of Allah ﷻ}]:

> The specifications and restrictions devised by the spiritual masters in the meditative devotions are not innovations. It is shocking

> from someone as intelligent as yourself to make analogies between the conditions for the permissibility of celebration of the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ birth upon the meditative devotions when you know that attainment of a nisba is an order of Allah ﷻ [*ma'mūr min Allāh*] while celebration of the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ birth is not. Although this order of Allah ﷻ is a 'doubtful universal' [*kullī mushaqqiq*][1] the lowest state of which is obligatory [īmān] and the highest desirable [iḥsān], it is incorrect to analogize celebration of the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ birth, which is an innovation, with the meditative devotions. Numerous aḥādīth and ayas prove that attaining a nisba is an order of Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ [in the ayas of the Qur'an] and the Blessed Prophet ﷺ [in the aḥādīth] demonstrated the nisba in every way possible by which it becomes abundantly clear that the whole Shari'a is actually a manifestation of the nisba. This is something we cannot dwelve into because it would become a lengthy discussion. If you think deeply you will observe how every aya and hadith [implictly or explicitly] manifests the nisba.

Therefore, when there is so much overwhelming evidence of it being an order of Allah ﷻ, then the methods devised and specified to fulfill this order of Allah ﷻ will also be an order of Allah ﷻ.

One method may be favored over another depending on the times. Thus, in one period, the nisba was easily achieved through ṣalāt, recitation of the Qur'an, and the dhikrs narrated in the aḥādīth. Though the newly devised methods of meditative devotions were permissible during that period, they were certainly not necessary to achieve the nisba. However, after some time, people changed [i.e., the faith became weak, taqwā disappeared and people became enamored with the material world] and it became worse successively as time passed and as people moved further away from the time of the golden era. The method of nisba achieved in such an era would differ from the method of nisba achieved in the golden era. In this period, the nisba could not be achieved through ṣalāt or fasting, therefore the physicians of the esoteric devised certain conditions, fine-tuning the amount and frequency of dhikr and other such things according to the people of that time. Since the nisba in this period could not be achieved in any other way, these conditions and specifications cannot be called innovations in Dīn. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that it was obligatory because the attainment of an objective of Dīn was not possible without them. Since the objective [attaining a strong nisba through iḥsān]

is an order of Allah ﷻ, the method [meditative devotions] of attaining it also became an order of Allah ﷻ. Thus, it cannot be called an innovation.

Likewise, with the passage of time, another generation of people came who were weaker than the last, and thus the method by which the nisba was achieved would differ greatly from the people before them. Once again, the method of attaining the nisba was modified and revised to help achieve the main objective. With the passing of time this paradigm repeated itself and modifications were made in the methods of achieving the nisba. It is like a traditional doctor prescribing a treatment in the winter which, if prescribed in the summer, would become deadly. Thus, a change of weather forces a change in the type of treatment. The treatments used a hundred years ago, found in the older books of medicine, are not potent enough to treat people today. Modifications in these treatments comply with the basic principles of traditional medicine though it opposes the prescribed treatment which it modifies. In reality, this modification will not be considered an innovation, but rather a fulfillment of the basic principles of traditional medicine.

Another example of this is exalting the name of Allah ﷻ. You know that spears, swords, and even stones fulfilled the military objective in the past. The use of these weapons is even proven in the aḥādīth, yet arming oneself with these weapons today is suicide. Today, one must use guns, rifles, and tanks [during battle, instead of using swords, bows and arrows] because it is impossible to reach the objective of exalting the name of Allah ﷻ [to preserve peace and justice] without them. Yet, no one calls these changes innovations or declares them forbidden on the basis that it is imitation of the disbelievers. In fact, we consider employing of armaments obligatory, necessary and an order from Allah ﷻ because the objective cannot be achieved without them. Thus, these things in themselves become an order from Allah ﷻ; likewise is the case with meditative devotions.

Of the dhikrs, the most important is the statement of faith. Abū Saʿīd Khudrī ؓ narrates that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Once, Mūsā ؑ said in the court of Allah ﷻ, 'Teach me some dhikr by which I remember you and call you.' [He was told] 'Say *lā ilāha illa Allāh*.' Musa ؑ replied, 'Everyone in the world says this.' Allah ﷻ said, 'Say *lā ilāha illa Allāh*.' 'O Allah ﷻ, I ask for something for myself only,' replied Mūsā ؑ. To this, Allah ﷻ responded, 'If the whole sky and earth are put on one arm of a balance and the statement of faith on the other, the arm upon which the statement of faith is placed will be weightier.'"[2]

## THE GREATEST DHIKR: LĀ ILĀHA ILLA ALLĀH ﷻ

I have mentioned many aḥādīth on the virtues, excellence, and importance of the statement of faith "*lā ilāha illa Allāh*" in my book *Faḍā'il al-Dhikr*. One of the aḥādīth is narrated by Jābir ﷺ that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "The best of dhikr is *lā ilāha illa Allāh*."[3] Mulla 'Alī Qārī says, "There is no doubt that the most excellent of all dhikrs is *lā ilāha illa Allāh* because the entire Dīn is balanced on the fulcrum of this statement of faith." This is why the sufis particularly emphasize the statement of faith and prefer it over all other dhikrs. They stress the use of this statement of faith the most because its benefits and blessings are not to be found in any other dhikr.

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Constantly revive your faith." The Companions ﷺ asked, "How do we do that O Blessed Prophet ﷺ?" "Recite the statement of faith abundantly."[4] The spiritual masters prescribe this dhikr in different ways similar to the way physicians prescribe different medicines for different illnesses. The "twelve *tasbīḥ*" is common among the Chishtiyya. First, is *lā ilāha illa Allāh* two-hundred times, then *illa Allāh* four hundred times, then *Allāhu Allāh* six-hundred times, and finally *Allāh*, one-hundred times.

## OBJECTIONS RAISED ABOUT DHIKR

Shaikh Thānwī writes in *al-Takashshuf*:

> Some people object to the dhikr of '*illa Allāh*' ['except Allah ﷻ'] that the 'exception' [*mustathnā*] without the 'exception from' [*mustathnā minhu*] and the governing noun/verb ['*āmil*] is meaningless. They say that if it doesn't increase reward and is meaningless, then why recite it?
>
> In reply: the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said in the sermon at the conquest of Makka, "The grass of the Sacred Precinct [*al-Ḥaram*] should not be cut." 'Abbās ﷺ asked, "O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, except sweet rush [a type of grass] [*idhkhar*]?" The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, "Except sweet rush."[5] In this hadith, "except sweet rush" proves that the governing noun/verb ['*āmil*] and 'exception from' [*musthanā minhu*] can be omitted if there is a valid reason to do so. Thus, dropping the governing noun/verb, *lā*, and the 'exception from', *ilāha,* from

*illa Allāh* is validated by the fact that it was mentioned previously or that the belief of the recitor furnishes the missing governing noun/verb and 'exception from'.[6]

Another reply is that the dhikr of *lā ilāha illa Allāh* preceded the dhikr of *illa Allāh*. Thus, each time *illa Allāh* is recited the governing noun/verb and the 'exception from' will be included implicitly. When there is no proof that repetition of *illa Allāh* is restricted to any specific amount, thus the more one recites the better and more effective. Therefore, it is narrated that the Companions ﷺ said in certain instances,

مَا زَالَ يُكَرِّرُهَا حَتَّي قُلْنَا لَيْتَهُ سَكَتَ

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ repeated it until we wished he were quiet.[7]

Examples of such repetition are observed in the aḥādīth. In one incident, a disbeliever said the statement of faith in the battlefield as Usāma ﷺ was raising his sword to kill him. Usāma ﷺ still went ahead and killed him, assuming he said the statement of faith to save his life. When the Blessed Prophet ﷺ heard of this, he called Usāma ﷺ and asked him, "How are you going to respond when be brings the statement of faith on the Day of Judgment,"[8] and repeated this several times.

In one chapter of *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "There is one such act by which Allah ﷻ will elevate the level of his servants in Paradise, the distance between each level being equivalent to the distance between the earth and the skies." A Companion ﷺ asked, "What is it O Blessed Prophet ﷺ?" The Blessed Prophet ﷺ replied, "Struggle in the path of Allah ﷻ, struggle in the path of Allah ﷻ, struggle in the path of Allah ﷻ!"[9]

He repeated it three times. There are hundreds of such aḥādīth in the books known to the teachers and students of aḥādīth in which one word is mentioned repeatedly.

Likewise, some people object to the dhikr of 'Allah ﷻ, Allah ﷻ' because they say 'Allah ﷻ' is singular. They say that when it is neither informative [*khabriyya*] nor formative [*inshā'ī*][10] then what is its benefit? However, if we look in the hadith we find the blessed name of Allah ﷻ used in the singular as in the narration of *Muslim*, "The Day of Judgment will not occur until there is none in the world to

say Allah ﷾, Allah ﷾."[11] As this hadith indicates, it is permissible to say the name of Allah ﷾ repeatedly. It should also be known that a meaning of a word should not be judged linguistically only [i.e. as formative and informative]. After all, how can it be meaningless when the purpose is to gain blessings and benefit? Allah ﷾ says:

وَاذْكُرِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ

*And remember the name of your Lord.*[12]

In this aya, the dhikr of our Creator includes utterance of His name. Another explanation for this is that the vocative noun [*ḥarf al-nidā*] has been omitted as is common in the Arabic language. Mention of the vocative [as in saying 'O Allah ﷾'] is to indicate yearning [*shauq*] for something whereas the omission of it (as in 'Allah ﷾' by itself) is for enjoyment.

Shaikh Thānwī writes in *Bawādir*:

> The closest thing to my heart on this topic is the example of when someone recites the Qur'an. When someone reads the Qur'an for recitation, he is obligated to recite the way it has been transmitted to us [through the pious predecessors]. Reciting in any other way is an innovation. Though, sometimes the purpose of reading Qur'an is not to recite but to memorize. The example of this is how one word or aya is repeated several times. One is not obligated to know the method of the pious predecessors in memorizing the Qur'an. We are not required to find out how the pious predecessors used to memorize the Qur'an and make sure we follow the transmitted method.
>
> Likewise, in the dhikr, sometimes the dhikr itself is the objective. If this is the case, then one must take care to follow the transmitted method. However, if the purpose is not worship but to achieve a certain state [iḥsān], then it is not conditional to follow a methodology of the pious predecessors [even if there is one]. Now, the prescribed repetitions of *illa Allāh* and Allah ﷾ are not objectives. The purpose of these prescribed repetitions is to create and establish a certain feeling; and that is that nothing besides Allah ﷾ exists, and to slowly increase one's concentration on Allah ﷾ alone. Therefore, in the

beginning [before we begin the dhikr] we perceive the existence of everything around us but as we impress the dhikr of 'there is no god but Allah ﷻ [*lā ilāha illa Allāh*]' we negate the existence of everything around us and instill this negation into our heart. As we progress in this negation, we inculcate the certainty of His essence in our mind by repeating the dhikr of *illa Allāh*. But certainty of the essence of Allah ﷻ is itself relative to the essence of Allah ﷻ so we reach higher for the essence of Allah ﷻ itself by firmly embedding Him in the heart through the dhikr of '*Allāhu Allāh'* When one devotes himself to the dhikr of '*Allāhu Allāh'*, the love of everything besides Allah ﷻ leaves the heart and this person becomes absorbed in Allah ﷻ only. When this feeling permeates the heart, the dhikr of '*Allāhu Allāh'* intensifies and helps him realize his goal quickly; and this is the reason for which the dhikr of Allah ﷻ is prescribed.

By the grace of Allah ﷻ, this article removes all objections on this topic and proves that the accusation about the dhikr of Allah ﷻ being an innovation stems from a lack of understanding on this issue. Now only one question remains and that is that will one gain reward for this type of dhikr? In reply, we ask: Will the person who repeats the words of the Qur'an to memorize it, gain reward for memorization? The answer to the first is the same for the second. According to the rules, the combined answer to both these questions is that though one may not gain reward for repeating recitation [of an aya] and dhikr, preparation for a perfect recitation and dhikr [in which one attains full benefit spiritually] is surely rewarding.

## ENDNOTES

1 A term of logic made up of two parts, 'doubtful' [*mushaqqaq*] and 'universal' [*kullī*].

**Universal**—is that which is contrary to a particular. For example, faith is common to all Muslims; therefore, faith is a universal.

**Doubtful**—is the meaning of that noun which applies to some of an individual kind [e.g., man] more forcibly, and in preference to others. For example, the *nisba* is universal to all Muslims [because without it one would not be Muslim] but is more pronounced in some Muslims than others, such as the friends of Allah. The aforementioned discussion proves that nisba is a 'doubtful universal.'

2 Mustadrak, *Kitāb al-Duā' wa al-Takbīr*

3 Tirmidhī, *M*ā *Jā anna Da'wat al-Muslim*

4 *Musnad Aḥmad*, 14/327 | Mustadrak , *Kitāb al-Tauba wa al-Ināba*

5 Bukhārī, *al-Idhkar wa al-Ḥashīsh fi al-Qabr*

6 Since every Muslim believes 'there is no God but Allah ﷻ', his saying *illa Allāh* (but Allah ﷻ) will spell out as meaning 'there is no God but Allah ﷻ.'

7 Bukhārī, *M*ā *Qāla fī Shahādat al-Zūr*

8 Muslim, *Taḥrīm Qatl al-Kāfir*

9 Muslim, *Bayān mā A'adda Allah li al-Mujāhid*

10 **Informative**—is a sentence which provides information of any kind.

**Formative**—is a sentence which seeks to produce new information e.g, a question, an order, or exclamation.

11 Muslim, *Dhihāb al-Īmān*

12 73:8

الرَّابِعَ عَشَرَ

Chapter Fourteen

# Visualization of the Mentor

## [*Taṣawwur-e-Shaikh*]

### EVIDENCE OF VISUALIZATION OF MENTOR

*Another* name for visualization of the mentor [*tasawwur-e-shaikh*] is *shugl-e-rābiṭa*, *barzakh,* and *wāsiṭa* [in Urdu][1]. Visualization of the mentor is one of the most important meditative devotions to the masters of Sulūk and they have praised it for its various benefits. Some of the elders forbade it except under certain circumstances. However, this is not correct in this servant's opinion because of the numerous aḥādīth in evidence of it. Therefore, I cannot understand those who say it is forbidden. In regards to applying perfume in the state of wearing haj attire [*iḥrām*], 'Ā'isha ﷺ says:

كَأَنِّي أَنْظُرُ إِلَى وَبِيصِ الطِّيبِ فِي مَفْرِقِ النَّبِيِّ صلى الله عليه وسلم

I can almost see the glint of perfume in the parting of the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ hair.[2]

In a narration by Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ in *al-Takashshuf*, [with references from *Bukhārī* and *Muslim*], he says:

كَأَنِّي أَنْظُرُ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم

It is as if I see the Blessed Prophet ﷺ.[3]

ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd ﷺ is narrating this hadith while recalling how once the Blessed Prophet ﷺ narrated a story of one of the prophets who was murdered by his people.

Under the chapter of 'the narrations on silver rings', *Abū Dāwūd* narrates a hadith by ʿAlī ﷺ that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Read this supplication often: *Allāhumma ahdinī wa saddidnī* (O Allah ﷻ, give me guidance and make me steadfast). When you say, *ahdinī* (give me guidance) visualize the path of guidance and when you say, *saddidnī* (make me steadfast) visualize the straightening of an arrow."[4]

In *Badhl al-Majhūd*, my spiritual mentor and guide, Shaikh Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī, explained:

> By 'imagine yourself on the path of guidance' try to visualize a person walking on a straight path without turning right or left. If he turns right or left, he cannot reach his destination. Likewise, when imagining guidance, think that walking straight is a condition for reaching the destination. When you say '*saddīd*' and imagine 'the straightening of an arrow,' imagine that Allah ﷻ is rectifying and removing any crookedness that is within me.

In the commentary of *Abū Dāwūd*, Shaikh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī says:

> The reason the Blessed Prophet ﷺ asked us to imagine these things is to keep our thoughts focused. And also because visualizing tangible objects is easier than visualization of intangible ones. The reason the Blessed Prophet ﷺ told us that one should imagine an arrow and a path while supplicating is to prevent stray thoughts from distracting a person. This also indicates the permissibility of visualizing ones mentor because the status of a spiritual mentor is certainly not lower than an arrow. There is also no harm in love of the mentor entering the heart when he is visualizing him. However, it is dangerous and harmful to imagine the spiritual mentor actually effecting changes in the heart, to believe he is omnipresent, or that he is aware of his

> inner state. This is why the spiritual masters disagree about visualization of the spiritual mentor. This discussion though is only rhetorical because those who say it is permissible are looking at the first part while those who say it is forbidden are referring to the latter issue [i.e., to believe the spiritual mentor is ever-present]. Though when the later scholars saw that it lead to corruption in the belief of Muslims, they forbade it in general, and this is correct in light of the condition of the community.

There are many narrations of this kind in the books of aḥādīth. In *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥāba*, under the chapter of 'the reality of faith', the Blessed Prophet ﷺ asks Ḥārith ibn Mālik ؓ in his narration, "How was your morning?" He replied, "In the state of being a true believer." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ asked, "What is the reality of your true faith?" He replied, "I turned away from the world…and I see the throne of my Lord and the dwellers of Paradise visiting each other; I also hear the screaming of the dwellers of Hellfire."

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "He is a believer whose heart has been illuminated."[5]

In another narration he asked Muādh ؓ the same question. He replied, "I woke up in the state of faith." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ asked him, "What is the reality of your faith?" He replied, "When I wake up in the morning, I see a nation on its knees. They are being called toward their book of deeds along with their prophets and the idols they worshipped. I see the punishment of the dwellers of Hellfire and the reward of the dwellers of Paradise."[6]

In *Shamā'il*, 'Aun ibn Abī Juḥaifa narrates from his father, "I saw the Blessed Prophet ﷺ in red clothing. I can almost see the radiance of his blessed ankles before my very eyes."[7] Likewise, Anas ؓ narrates, "I can see the white gleam of his ring before my very eyes."[8] There are numerous narrations related to visualization of different things in the books of aḥādīth. For this reason, it is difficult to say that visualization of the spiritual mentor is completely forbidden, though it will be forbidden if it leads to something forbidden. Otherwise, it is an excellent antidote for stray thoughts and a person stricken by blind love [for a woman].

## BENEFICIAL FOR THE ADVANCED DANGEROUS FOR BEGINNERS

In *Taʿlīm al-Dīn*, it says:

> The books on this subject state this much: that visualization of the countenance of the spiritual mentor and his qualities develops love in the heart and strengthens the nisba with his Lord; and this strong nisba produces many blessings. Some of the authorities in this field say little [on the subject of visualization of the mentor] except that one thought repels another. So, visualizing one's mentor repels the stray thoughts and navigates the thought towards Allah ﷻ.

Anyhow, whatever benefits and wisdom there may be in visualization of the spiritual mentor, my experience has shown me that this spiritual devotion is beneficial for the advanced and perilous for the novices because it takes them towards image-worship. Imam Ghazālī and other authorities in the science of Taṣawwuf prohibit the general public and the feebleminded from performing any devotions which produce clairvoyance. Therefore, the public should be stopped from this and if the advanced and more knowledgeable try this they should be careful not to exceed its boundaries. They should not believe their mentor watches over them or is there to help them in times of need. However, it is possible for one to see his mentor when he visualizes him regularly. Sometimes, the image he sees is a figment of his imagination, but at other times, an inspiration from Allah ﷻ that appears in the form of his spiritual mentor, though the mentor himself is unaware of it. Many people make mistakes in this regard.

Shaikh Madanī writes:

> Visualization of the mentor prevents one from the whisper of Satan and evil thoughts, and produces remarkable feelings, though the spiritual mentor is completely unaware of it. The mentor is neither intending to help him nor is his attention turned towards his student. These are natural influences that Allah ﷻ has created to save one from the whispers of Satan and to allow the blessings of Allah ﷻ to descend upon him. Since people often err in this matter, the wise ones [*ḥukamā*] are exceptionally careful in this regard otherwise, from the Shariʿa viewpoint, numerous narrations prove it is permissible.

In another letter, Shaikh Madanī writes:

> Though Shāh Ismaīl Shāhīd[9] prohibited visualization of the spiritual mentor as it produced negative consequences at times, it was narrated to me through Shāh 'Abd al-Ghanī Mujaddadī that he was not opposed to it. When some of his confidants asked of its permissibility, he narrated the hadith of Ḥasan ﷺ as evidence in which Ḥasan ﷺ asked his [maternal] uncle Hind ibn Abī Hāla ﷺ, "I asked about the countenance and [physical] attributes of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ.'[10] This clearly proves that he wished to replicate an image of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ in his mind and this is exactly what visualization is." This hadith is narrated in detail in *Shamā'il al-Tirmidhī*, and if one wishes to read the translation he may refer to my book, *Khaṣā'il al-Nabawī*. In the commentary of this hadith it says, "I wished he would narrate some of his beautiful attributes to me that I make their mention a source of love and connection for myself, and if possible I will make effort to imbue these attributes within me."

In another place Shaikh Madanī writes:

> To create an image of something in Arabic is called *taṣawwur* [visualization], regardless of whether the image is animate or inanimate, a specific person or any person, any mentor or one's own mentor, mothers or fathers, and regardless of whether the visualizing of this image is beneficial or not. In convention, however, visualization of the mentor refers to creating and then maintaining the image of an exalted mentor. By consensus, it is permissible to create and envision an image of one's Shaikh. In fact, it is beneficial. The Companions ﷺ and the Blessed Prophet ﷺ were favorable towards it; Ḥasan ﷺ also asked his uncle Hind ibn Abī Hāla ﷺ on many occasions about the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and created an image in his mind through the description he was given. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ also described the clothing and characteristics of Mūsā ﷺ, Īsā ﷺ, and Ibrāhīm ﷺ to the Companions ﷺ, which clearly proves that the purpose was to create an image of these blessed prophets in the minds of the Companions ﷺ.

After this, Shaikh Madanī narrates many aḥādīth in which the Blessed Prophet ﷺ described the countenance, characteristics, and traits of the different prophets of Allah ﷻ. Therefore, in one narration the Blessed Prophet ﷺ says about Mūsā ؑ, "He was of darker complexion and with curly hair, as if I see him at this moment riding a red camel and passing through a valley."[11]

Shaikh Madanī comments:

> Many authentic narrations of this kind not only prove the permissibility of visualization of the spiritual mentor, but also indicate that it is desirable and has many benefits. Otherwise, had it been forbidden, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ would not have described them and would have unequivocally forbade it. It is because of these benefits that the spiritual mentors instituted visualization of the mentor and designed a methodology to derive its full benefits.

## METHOD OF VISUALIZATION

Shaikh al-Hāj Imdād Allāh wrote to his successor, Shaikh Qāsim Nānautwī:

> If time permits, sit in solitude after Fajr, Maghrib, or 'Ishā' ṣalāt in a room, empty out your heart of all thoughts, and focus on this: Imagine yourself sitting in front of your spiritual mentor and that the bountiful blessings of Allah ﷻ are transferring from his heart to yours. If you enjoy it and feel like continuing, then do so; otherwise do dhikr of Allah ﷻ in negation [*lā Ilāha*] and affirmation [*illa Allāh*] in a mid-tone. Continue this for approximately two hours.

In another letter to Shaikh Nānautwī, he writes:

> If you have time after Fajr or Maghrib, spend a little time in meditation [*murāqaba*]. Envision yourself sitting in front of your spiritual mentor and that something is emanating from his heart into yours. If Allah ﷻ wills, there will be spiritual attention on you from this side [i.e., from al-Hāj Imdād Allāh]. If the mercy of Allah ﷻ is with us you will see benefit, if Allah ﷻ wills. Please do not worry.

Shāh Walī Allāh Dehlawī says in *al-Qaul al-Jamīl*:

> The spiritual masters of the Chishtiyya say the greatest objective is to imbue the heart with love and respect for the mentor and to visualize it. I tell you that there are manifestations of Allah ﷻ. Thus, He manifests Himself as the worshipped one before the feebleminded and intelligent when they worship Him. In view of His greatness and secrets, the Shari‘a has explained His being in the direction of the *qibla* and sitting on the throne [*‘arsh*]. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Do not spit in front of you whenever anyone of you prays ṣalāt because Allah ﷻ is between him and the *qibla*." O seeker, there is no harm if you set your sight on and hope in none but Allah ﷻ. Also there is no harm in you imagining nothing but His throne and the light surrounding His throne. This light is bright like the illumined hue of the moon. Also, there is no harm if you do not concentrate yourself on anything but the *qibla*. The permissibility of all this is indicated in the aforementioned hadith; and one has practiced upon this hadith if he brings anyone of these [aforementioned] scenarios to mind. And Allah ﷻ knows best.

## DRAWING THE LINE BETWEEN PERMISSIBLE AND IMPERMISSIBLE

Then Shaikh Madanī says after a long article, "This method of visualization of the mentor is a tradition inherited from the pious predecessors and which yielded powerful results until people came in the latter era who abused it and exceeded its permissible limits. They began adding new things which caused major corruption and deviated from the straight path."

After this, Shaikh Madanī narrates four or five fatwas from *Fatāwa-e-Rashīdiyya* and some excerpts from the letters of Shaikh Qāsim Nānautwī, and then writes:

> In brief, the need to eliminate evil thoughts and the whispers of Satan and to strengthen the willpower, especially in worship, is so important that it need not even be mentioned. Since the effects of visualizing the mentor are profoundly advantageous in this respect, experience and evidence led the elders of the community

to put this into practice. The community benefited tremendously from this until some pretenders came in the latter age who added forbidden things to it. One example of this is the belief that the spiritual mentor is omnipresent or the danger of a seeker becoming so fixated with the image of the spiritual mentor that he becomes unmindful of the ultimate goal and his true Creator. Other examples include believing that the mentor is like the house of Allah ﷻ, ṣalāt should be prayed towards him, and belief that the mentor can change the condition of his heart, aggrandizement of the spiritual mentor, or worshipping the spiritual mentor's image as is common among many ignorant followers of the pseudo-sufis. Therefore, it became incumbent on the elders to study the situation and uproot this method of polytheism and disbelief. Anyhow, this practice is generally forbidden and unnecessary. When giving fatwa or putting it into practice one should first think it over and then decide wisely.

## AN ANECDOTE

It is narrated in *Arwāḥ-e-Thalātha* that Sayyid Aḥmad Shāhīd[12] went to Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz, who instructed him to begin visualizing his mentor. When Sayyid Aḥmad Shāhīd politely refused, Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz recited this Persian poem:

*Wet your place of prayer with wine*
*if the tavern-keeper so tells you,*
*Because the spiritual mentor is not uninformed*
*of the different stations of the Path*

[i.e. you may think visualization of the spiritual mentor is polytheism, but you should trust the spiritual mentor because he knows better what is beneficial for you though it may seem otherwise.]

Sayyid Aḥmad Shāhīd replied, "I will commit sin if you say so, but never polytheism." Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz hugged him and said, "That's fine, we will take you through the path of prophethood; you are not congruous with the path of friendship [*wilāya*]."

I have heard an incident related to the aforementioned poem from my elders. Once, a student asked the meaning of this poem. At first Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz said, "Don't worry about such things, just keep to your studies." But when he insisted, Shaikh gave him ten rupees and said, "Go to a brothel and ask the owner if there is any girl available." At first the student was baffled and hesitated, but since he himself had asked he felt obliged to go. The owner said, "A beautiful girl has arrived, she is in such and such room. I will go and talk to her." He went to her, convinced her, and came back to tell the student, "She is willing, but you will have to come at night."

When the student arrived at her room that night, the girl was sitting crying, her head hung low. The student was astonished. He insisted he had not forced her, but she cried even more. The student didn't know what to do. He insisted she tell him why she was crying, but she refused. This continued for some time. Finally, she gave in and said, "I am an oppressed woman and have been treated unjustly. I have been without food for many days now and am wandering here and there. My husband left me and went somewhere and I do not know where he is. I have been looking for him for many months now."

He asked the name of her husband and where he was from. She discovered that the student standing in front of her was her husband. He asked her, "Raise your head and look at me." When she looked up they recognized each other. One night, the student had quietly slipped out of his house because of his desire to seek knowledge. The student stayed there the entire night. In the morning, he came to Shaikh and said, "The poem is true."

[Translator: The mentor is informed of things that seem sinful, as in the example of sending him to the brothel, but which turn out beneficial to the seeker, as in the example of finding his wife.]

I have heard other stories similar to this from my elders. The condition, however, is that the narrator is truly a spiritual mentor, an authentic scholar of Shari'a and Taṣawwuf, and is informed of the secrets of the Creator. This is not the job of any claimant to piety and greatness.

## SHAIKH GANGOHĪ'S SPIRITUALITY

Once, Shaikh Gangohī was in a fiery mood when the issue of visualizing the spiritual mentor came up. He asked, "Should I say it?" When he was requested to speak, he again asked, "Should I say it?" When he

was again requested to speak, he said, "For three full years, the image of my spiritual mentor, al-Hāj Imdād Allāh , has been in my heart and I have never done anything without asking him first." Then he became even more passionate and asked louder, "Should I say it?" "Please do," was the request. He said, "For many years the Blessed Prophet ﷺ has been in my heart and I never did anything without consulting him first." Having said this he became even more spirited and asked, "Should I say it?" "Please do," was the request. But he remained quiet and when people insisted, he said, "Forget it." The next day when people insisted, he said, "Then iḥsān was achieved."

In the commentary, Shaikh Thānwī says:

> And the reason he repeatedly asked, 'Should I say it?' was probably to check people's eagerness, to test them, and see if they truly would be able to accept a reality that was otherwise unacceptable. And the reason he avoided repeating the question the second time over may be because there was no need to. And the first time he asked is because the answer is absorbed better in the heart when one is eager to know something. And consultation with an image is the power of the psyche and it sometimes happens that the soul assimilates itself to a corporeal entity. It is evident that the continuity of this thought does not justify belief in that the spiritual mentor is ever-present and that one is being guided by him in that state. After that, when he said, 'forget it,' and deferred the matter [of mentioning iḥsān] to the next day may be because people [who look at these type of spiritual states superficially] don't consider the third state of iḥsān to be higher than the first two. Therefore, people would not understand the importance and greatness of one who has reached the level of iḥsān. Upon insistence, though, his reply clarified that the last state is actually higher than the first two. This is because iḥsān is an objective and a perpetual spiritual state while the first two are non-objectives and only transient experiences. In that case, the difference between them is great. And if this doesn't explain why he deferred, then it must be that he didn't disclose it because [he knew] the public wouldn't be able to comprehend it. Perhaps it is one of the manifestations of the Creator; something so magnificent that it would only raise objections, the way the secrets of the sufis raise objections for people who look at the outward only.

## ENDNOTES

1 *Talīm al-Dīn*

2 Bukhārī, *Man Taṭayyaba*

3 Muslim, *Ghazwat al-Uḥud*

4 Abū Dāwūd, *mā Jā fī Khatam al-Ḥadīd*

5 *Muṣannaf Abd al-Razzāq*, 11/129

6 *al-Baḥr al-Madīd*, under 7/187 | Musnad al-Shihāb, *kaifa Aṣbaḥta yā Mu'ādh*

7 Shamā'il, *mā Jā fī Libās*

8 Shamā'il, *mā Jā fī Dhikr Khātam*

9 Shāh Muḥammud Ismā'īl Shahīd (1779-1831) was born in Phulat, India. His passion and firm belief in the oneness of Allah ﷻ [*tauḥīd*] was unequalled. Due to his passionate love for the oneness of Allah ﷻ, he was anguished by the rituals and superstitions common amongst Muslims. As a powerful speaker, he preached against grave-worship, veneration of saints and other such heretical rituals. He helped eradicate many of the superstitions Muslims had adopted from Hinduism and brought them back to the oneness of Allah ﷻ.

10 Shamā'il, *mā Jā fī Khuluq*

11 al-Sunan al-Kubrā li al-Baihaqī, *Dukhūl Makka bi ghair Irāda*

12 Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd (1786-1831) was born in Delhi, India. He was strict upon the Sunna and intolerant of innovations and even anything that was questionable as innovation. His aim in life was to eliminate innovations from the Indian subcontinent and he spent most of his life doing so. Due to his strict adherence to the Shari'a, intolerance of customs, and forceful personality he quickly became a polarized figure who was either revered or hated, both by scholars and the public. He spent the last years of his life touring the country with his followers establishing the Sunna wherever he went. He was martyred in in the battle of Bālakote fighting against a superior Sikh force that was aided and abetted by Muslim chiefs who saw the loss of their power by his call to the Qur'an and Sunna.

الخامس عشر

Chapter Fifteen

# Clairvoyance of the Heart [*Kashf al-Ṣudūr*] and the Graves [*Kashf al-Qubūr*]

## Clairvoyance: Not an Objective of the Path

*Clairvoyance regularly* occurs amongst the masters of Sulūk. These clairvoyance's are usually brought on by spiritual exertions while sometimes it is purely a bestowment of Allah ﷻ. Clairvoyances are not limited to Taṣawwuf because any person who exerts himself spiritually [Muslim or non-Muslim] can have clairvoyance. This is why clairvoyance is not taken seriously by the spiritual masters; in fact they disregard it completely. Sometimes when seekers begin experiencing clairvoyances their mentors may stop them from spiritual exertions.

It is written in *Āp Bītī* that:

> One of my close friends, Shaikh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Gangohī, was also one of my father's favorite students in Gangoh. He moved with my father when my father moved permanently to Saharānpūr [Maẓāhir al-ʿUlūm], and studied the books of hadith in Maẓāhir al-ʿUlūm. Finally, he took baiʿa with my mentor, Shaikh Sahāranpūrī. He was strict on his daily prescribed devotions. He was an imam of one of the masjids in Kasolī near Shimla where he taught children Qur'an. As I was the one who mainly wrote my shaikh's letters [and therefore

> had to read the letters sent to him], I saw that his spiritual condition were lofty. In one letter he wrote about some of his clairvoyance's and lofty states. After reading this letter, I truly thought that Shaikh would give him successorship, but instead he replied, "Stop all the meditative devotions and the dhikrs except the obligatory acts and emphasized Sunnas."

Even when clairvoyance came from Allah ﷻ, my elders considered it an obstruction in the path of Taṣawwuf. My mentor said, "It is like a person walking on a path with lush gardens and rosebushes on both sides. If he stops to enjoy the beauties of the garden and continues to do so, he will not arrive at his destination [i.e., he will arrive late]."

This is why my elders generally disliked the clairvoyances. There were both types amongst my elders, those who didn't see clairvoyance like my mentor and then those who saw them regularly like Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm. I have heard the statement of Shaikh Thānwī many times that, "I have no problem sitting with Shaikh al-Hind, Mahmūd al-Ḥasan and Shaikh Khalīl Aḥmad, but I can't sit in the gatherings of Shāh 'Abd al-Raḥīm; who knows what is disclosed to him."

I have also heard on various occasions that there were both types among the seekers of Shaikh Gangohī. Shaikh Siddīq Aḥmad Ambhetwī had many clairvoyances though my spiritual mentor had none. Since this is something one achieves after exhaustive spiritual exertions, forty day retreats and holding of the breath [*ḥabs al-nafas*], the elders do not consider clairvoyance a fundamental of Sulūk though it is not contrary to the Shari'a either.

## CLAIRVOYANCE OF THE GRAVE

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ passed by two graves and heard the punishment of the grave. One of them was being punished because he was not careful about urine and the other because of his calumniation of people. This is a famous hadith which has been narrated in all the hadith books. In *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, under the chapter of 'Certainty of the Punishment of the Grave,' Zaid ibn Thābit ؓ narrates that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ went to a garden on his donkey. Suddenly, the donkey broke into a gallop and the Blessed Prophet ﷺ lost balance and almost fell off. There were four or five graves in that garden where the deceased were suffering punishment

of the grave. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "I fear you will stop burying the dead otherwise I would supplicate that Allah ﷻ allow you to hear the punishment of the grave."[1]

In another hadith, it is narrated that the grave closed upon S'ad ibn Muādh ؓ. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "The grave closed upon S'ad ibn Muādh ؓ, then Allah ﷻ opened it by its blessings [of the *tasbīḥ* and *takbīr*]."[2] In another hadith of *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ*, Ibn 'Abbās ؓ narrates, "Once, some Companions ؓ pitched their tents in one place. They did not know there was a grave where they had camped. Suddenly, they heard somebody recite Sūrat al-Mulk. When the Blessed Prophet ﷺ was informed he said, 'Sūrat al-Mulk saves from the punishment of the grave.'"[3]

In *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥāba*, there is a long story about a youth who was very pious, performed a lot of worship, and spent most of his time in the masjid. Once, he prayed his 'Ishā' and went home. On his way he saw a beautiful woman who fell in love with him and who always sat in wait for him on the way. Once she seduced him and he went along with her. When they reached the door and the woman went inside, he was about to step in when he returned to his senses by the blessings of the dhikr of Allah ﷻ and recited this aya:

> *Surely, when the God-fearing are touched by any instigation from Satan, they become conscious* [*of Allah* ﷻ], *and at once they discern* [*the reality*].[4]

He then fell unconscious. The woman called her slave-girl to help pick him up. They dragged him to the door of his house and knocked on the door. The old father came out and saw his son unconscious at the door. He called his family out and they brought in the youth. Late at night, he regained consciousness and his father asked him what had happened. The father asked him, "Which aya did you recite?" The youth recited the aya and fell unconscious again. When people shook him they found he had died. They washed and buried him that very night. When news of this incident reached 'Umar ؓ he went to the father's house for condolences and asked, "Why didn't you inform me?" The father replied, "It was at night, O Amir of the Believers." 'Umar ؓ ordered, "Take me to his grave." 'Umar ؓ went with his companions to the grave and recited the following aya to the youth, "And for the one fearful of having to stand before his Lord, there are two gardens."[5] When he finished reciting the aya he heard a voice from the grave say twice, "O 'Umar ؓ, Allah ﷻ has granted me both of the gardens."[6]

In another amazing story from *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥāba*, once 'Umar ﷺ went to the graveyard of *Baqī'* and said, *"Salām* to you O People of the Graves, listen to our situation. Your women have married again, other people are now living in your homes, and all your wealth has been distributed." Then he heard a voice from the unseen saying, "Now listen to our situation. We have received whatever we prepared for the next world, we benefited from all the money we spent in the path of Allah ﷻ, and lost whatever we left behind."[7]

In another incident from *Ḥayāt al-Ṣaḥāba*, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar ﷺ said:

> Once, I passed by Badr and saw a man rise from a well. He had a chain around his neck and called me repeatedly saying, 'O 'Abd Allāh, give me water to drink.' Then another man rose from the same well saying, 'Do not give him any water, he is a disbeliever.' He then hit him with a sword and the first man fell back into the well. I returned to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and told him the whole incident. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, 'That was Abū Jahl and he will be punished in this manner until the Day of Judgment.'[8]

There are many narrations of this kind of hearing voices from the grave. Therefore, those who reject the clairvoyance's and paranormal incidents [*khawāriq*] are not educated in the knowledge of the aḥādīth.

Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Qayyim narrated many aḥādīth about voices from the grave in his book *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*. In one narration, Abū 'Uthmān Nahdī' says:

> Once Ibn Sīs went with a funeral procession and was wearing thin clothe at the time. He reached a grave, prayed two units, and leaned on the grave. He says, 'I swear by Allah ﷻ, my heart was awake that I suddenly heard a voice from the grave saying, 'Get out of here and do not hurt me. You living people do things while ignoring the consequences of your actions, and we look for reward but cannot do anything. The two units you prayed are more valuable to me than such and such amount of reward.'

In another incident, Shaikh Abū Qalīb says:

> I was returning from Shām to Basra. I got off at one place, and performed the ablutions. After praying two units, I put my head on

> a grave and fell asleep. When I awoke I saw that the deceased in this grave [on which I had fallen asleep] was complaining about me and saying, 'You kept me in distress the whole night. You people do things in the state that you are ignorant of the consequences of your actions, and we know the consequences but are unable to do anything. The two units you prayed are better than the material world and everything in it. May Allah ﷻ give the people of the world the best of returns. Please give them our greetings. We receive mountains of light through their supplications.'

Ibn Qayyim narrates many incidents all of which cannot be reproduced here. Ibn Qayyim narrates:

> One of my friends left his house at the time of 'Aṣr and went to the gardens. He narrates, 'I went into the cemetery shortly before sunset. The sun descended into the cemetery before it set in the horizon. I saw one grave that seemed like a flame of fire around a glass dish. The deceased was in the middle of this flame. I rubbed my eyes thinking maybe I am seeing this in my sleep. Then I looked afar and I saw the walls of the city and realized then that I was not sleeping at all. I reached home, numbed by what I saw. My family brought food for me, but I could not eat. When I returned to the city I inquired about the grave and learned it was the grave of a cruel tax collector.

In another narration, Abū Quḍā says:

> We came by a pond near the city of Basra and heard the sound of a donkey. I went to the people of the area and asked, 'Whose voice is this?' They said, 'This was a man who would say to his mother, 'You always bray like a donkey' when his mother asked him to run an errand. Since he died, every night you hear the braying of a donkey from his grave.

There are many eye-opening incidents of this kind.
He narrates another incident that 'Amr ibn Dīnār said:

> There was a man in our city whose sister became sick whom he visited every day. Then she died and he buried her. After the burial he

> remembered he had left something in the grave. He took one of his friends with him for help. They dug up the grave and found what he had left in the grave. He then told his friend, 'Move out of the way, I want to see how my sister is doing.' When he removed one of the bricks from the niche [*laḥad*] he saw flames of fire. He returned to ask their mother, 'What did my sister do her whole life?' The mother replied, 'Why do you ask? She has already left the world.' When he insisted she said, 'She was not punctual in her ṣalāt and would eavesdrop on her neighbors and spread the news to others.'

Ibn Abū al-Dunyā says:

> Someone came and asked Abū Isḥāq Fizārī, 'Is there any repentance for a grave-robber?' He replied, 'When there is true repentance then, yes, there is repentance for him.' The questioner said, 'I was a grave-robber and I saw many people whose faces were turned away from the qibla.' Abū Isḥāq did not know how to reply. He wrote to Imam Auzāʿī, who replied, 'These are people who turned away from the Sunna.'

After narrating many such incidents Ibn Qayyim says:

> There are many incidents of this kind which cannot be narrated here in which Allah ﷻ revealed the punishment or the comfort of the grave to some of his servants…and the heretics and unbelievers have no way to disprove these incidents.

The aforementioned article was about clairvoyance of the graves. As for clairvoyance of the heart, Ibn Qayyim writes in his book *Kitā al-Rūḥ*:

> Allah ﷻ praised the people with spiritual discernment [*firāsa*] in this aya of the Qur'an:

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِينَ

*Surely, in that there are signs for those who read signs.*[9]

## SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT OF THE BELIEVER

Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ and others say '*mutawassimīn*' refers to people with spiritual discernment. After quoting various ayas, Ibn Qayyim writes:

> The ability to spiritually discern is only for the person who is purified from all impurities and who has established closeness to Allah ﷻ. Such a person can see with a light that Allah ﷻ puts in his heart. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, 'Save yourself from the spiritual discernment of the believer for he sees with the light of Allah ﷻ.'[10] Allah ﷻ gives him this spiritual discernment because of his closeness to Allah ﷻ i.e. when the heart is close to Allah ﷻ all the evil thoughts that block the way from recognizing and realizing the truth are lifted; he then gains from the lantern [*mishkāt*] that is close to Allah ﷻ. The light he gains in his heart is relative to his closeness to Allah ﷻ and he sees through this light such things which people who are [spiritually] distant from Allah ﷻ cannot see. It is narrated in a hadith that Allah ﷻ says:
>
> *A person cannot gain closeness to me in any way better than the obligatory acts. A person gains closeness to me through the voluntary ṣalāt until I make him my beloved. And when I love him I become his ears by which he hears, his eyes by which he sees, his hands by which he holds, and his feet by which he walks. Thus, his hearing, seeing, holding, and walking happen by Me.*[11]
>
> When a person reaches this stage, the person's heart becomes like a gleaming mirror and the reflections of the realities enter into his heart. Then nothing of his spiritual discernment is ever wrong because when he sees through Allah ﷻ he sees only reality. When he hears through Allah ﷻ he only hears reality. This is not the knowledge of the unseen, but a knowledge that Allah ﷻ puts in his heart. When the heart is filled with light, the bountiful blessings of this light are seen on his limbs and the light travels from his heart to his eye. Then he sees from the eye according to the amount of light in his heart.
>
> The Blessed Prophet ﷺ saw Bait al-Muqaddas from Makka. While digging the trench in the battle of the Trench the buildings

of Shām, the ramparts of the city of Ṣan'ā in Yemen, and the city of Madā'in in Persia were shown to him. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ saw all this while sitting in Madina. When Negus died in Abyssinia, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ was informed of it. When Sāria ؓ was fighting in Nahāwand, 'Umar ؓ saw him and called him from the pulpit in Madina. When some people from the tribe of Banu Mazja arrived in Madina, 'Umar ؓ looked at Ashtar Nakh'aī up and down carefully and asked, 'Who is he?' People said, 'Mālik ibn Ḥārith.' He then said, 'May Allah ﷻ destroy him. I see Muslims facing hardship because of him [he was one of the leaders involved in the assassination of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān ؓ].'

Once, Imam Shāfi'ī and Imam Muḥammad were sitting in Masjid al-Nabawī when a man walked in. Imam Muḥammad said, 'I think he is a carpenter.' Imam Shāfi'ī said, 'I think he is a blacksmith.' They both asked him and he said, 'I used to be a blacksmith, now I am a carpenter.'

One youth, who lived in the company of Shaikh Junaid Baghdādī, could tell others the bad thoughts that passed through their hearts. Somebody mentioned this to Shaikh Junaid. He asked the youth, "What are these things people are saying about you?' He said, 'It is true. I want you to think of something." Shaikh Junaid said, 'I thought of it.' The youth told him what he was thinking, but Shaikh Junaid said, "Wrong." This happened three times. On the third try, the youth said, "It is strange, you are speaking the truth, but I know more about the state of my heart." Shaikh Junaid replied, 'You were correct all three times. I just wanted to test you.'

Abū Sa'īd Kharāz said, 'One day I entered the Sacred Precinct. At about the same time a beggar entered with two old shawls wrapped around him. When I saw him begging I said to myself, 'Such people are a burden on the world.' He looked at me and recited the aya, '*Be assured that Allah ﷻ knows what is in you, therefore fear Him*.'[12] When I repented in my heart, he recited another aya, '*Allah ﷻ is He who accepts repentance from His slaves*.'[13]

A man who had gazed at a woman came to 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān ؓ in his gathering. 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān ؓ said, "Some people come to me while the effects of fornication can be seen in their eyes." The man said, "Is there revelation after the Blessed Prophet ﷺ has left this world?" 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān ؓ replied, "No, but there is true spiritual discernment and insight. This was the spiritual

> discernment which Allah ﷻ puts in the hearts; when a thought crosses their heart, Allah ﷻ makes it into reality."

All of the aforementioned is taken from Ibn Qayyim's book, *Kitāb al-Rūḥ*. There are many incidents similar to the one above. In his Fatwas[14], Ibn Taimiyya also confirms the existence of clairvoyances. He says:

> 'Umar ؓ would say, 'Come near the mouths of the pious and listen closely to what they say because the realities are revealed to them.' These realities that 'Umar ؓ spoke of are things that Allah ﷻ reveals in their hearts because it is proven that the friends of Allah ﷻ do have clairvoyances.

There are two known opinions regarding Imam Abū Ḥanīfa and his view on used water. His first opinion was that it was impure and the second that it was pure. The reason for his first opinion was that he could see the sins that washed off from ablution. He supplicated to Allah ﷻ to take this clairvoyance from him as he did not wish to see the sins of his fellow brethren. His supplication was accepted and this clairvoyance was taken from him. After this, he took the second opinion that it was pure.

## ENDNOTES

1 Muslim, *'Arḍ Maq'ad al-Mayyit*

2 Musnad Aḥmad, *Musnad Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh*

3 Tirmidhī, *Mā Jā fī Faḍl Sūrat al-Mulk*

4 7: 201

5 55: 46

6 *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, 2/516

7 Ibid, 15/751

8 *Muṣannaf Ibn Abī Shaiba*, 7/234

9 15:75

10 Tirmidhī, *min Sūrat al-Ḥajar*

11 Bukhārī, *al-Tawāḍu*

12 2:235

13 9:104

14 *Fatāwā Ibn Taimiyya*, 11/204

السادس عشر

Chapter Sixteen

# Ecstatic Phrases [or Actions] [*Shaṭḥiāt*]

## WORDS UTTERED IN SPIRITUAL INTOXICATION

*Some* people when overcome by a spiritual state sometimes utter such things that oppose the Qur'an and Sunna. If a person utters anything that is against the Dīn in this state, it is called a *shaṭḥ*. Though this person is not sinful, it is forbidden to follow him. There are many sayings of the elders that indicate that someone who judges the entranced people [*ahl al-ḥāl*] from their exoteric state would give a fatwa of heresy. However, if such things are uttered in a state of intoxication or enrapture [*shauq*] it will not be considered disbelief, though at the same time they are not worthy of being followed.

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "When a person repents, Allah ﷻ is happier than a man traveling with all of his belongings and provisions on his mount. Then this man rides into a jungle where death is certain. He lies down under the shade of a tree and falls asleep. When he wakes up he sees no sign of his camel. He looks everywhere and is getting hungry and thirsty. Then he loses all hope and returns to the same place to die. He puts his head in his hands and falls asleep. He wakes up again and sees his camel with all his belongings and provisions on it standing nearby. At this moment, no one can imagine his joy and he says in elation, "O Allah ﷻ, you are my servant and I am your Lord."

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ says, "He was mistaken because of his excessive joy."[1]

This hadith is narrated by Abd Allāh Ibn Mas'ūd ﷺ and Anas ﷺ in *Bukhārī* and *Muslim* with different wordings. Shaikh Thānwī says in *al-Tasharruf*:

> This hadith indicates that a helpless person is forgiven for his mistake because the Blessed Prophet ﷺ quoted this person and did not rebut him. The joy which incited such a statement came from a thing of this material world. Imagine a person made helpless by his intense love for Allah ﷻ; this is one of the spiritual properties [*kaifiyyāt*] that evolves from adherence to this Dīn.
>
> The hadith about the Mother of the Believers, 'Ā'isha ﷺ, being accused of illicit behavior narrates, "When the ayas of the Qur'an were revealed which exonerated her of all wrongdoing, her mother said to her, 'Go to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and be grateful.' She was overcome by emotion and said, 'I swear by Allah ﷻ I will not go and I will not be grateful to anyone besides Allah ﷻ. He is the one who has acquitted me.'[2]

Shaikh Thānwī says, "Sometimes our elders said something in prose or verse that outwardly seemed blasphemous. When it is said in an intoxicated state it is called *shaṭḥ* and *aulāl*. The Mother of the Believers ﷺ statement falls under this category. It resulted from her profound grief because the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, himself a human and uninformed of the unseen, was confused and doubtful. The Mother of the Believers ﷺ was aware of his feelings about her and was grief stricken that he doubted her. When she was exonerated by revelation of the ayas she was fervent and said what she said at that moment. Since the Blessed Prophet ﷺ did not chastise her for this reply, it proves that those who utter ecstatic phrases are exempt from the general rule.

The Mother of the Believers ﷺ narrates:

> The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, 'I know when you are happy and also when you are angry with me.' I asked, 'How do you know Blessed Prophet ﷺ?' He replied, 'When you are happy you say, 'I swear by the Creator of Muḥammad ﷺ' and when you are angry you say, 'I swear by the Creator of Ibrāhīm ﷺ.'' I replied, 'You are right, except that I only leave out your name [otherwise I love you as much when I am angry as I do when I am happy with you].'[3]

These are the stories of true love. People who understand true love realize that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ understood she was overcome by a [spiritual] state when she swore by the name of Allah ﷻ and that it was just another expression of her love for her beloved. This is why he remained silent and did not rebuke her for her remark.

The story of Khawāja Aḥmad Jām, when he said, "We do it, we do it," has been narrated in a previous chapter. Khawāja spread his hand over the child and restored his vision as he repeated, "We do it, we do it."

Once, Shaikh Yaqūb Nānautwī[4] was sitting in his class, extremely sad. Amīr Shāh Khān and some others came into class precisely at that time. Shaikh said, "I have made a big mistake. I said such and such to Allah ﷻ and he replied such and such. Then I said something [which was outwardly disrespectful towards Allah ﷻ], to which He responded, 'Quiet! Stop this nonsense.' Then I was quiet and repented to Allah ﷻ and was finally forgiven."

Shaikh Qāsim Nānautwī shuddered when he heard this. He said, "Oh! Maulvī Ya'qūb said such a thing! I beg for forgiveness from Allah ﷻ, I beg for forgiveness from Allah ﷻ. I beg for forgiveness from Allah ﷻ. He is overwhelmed by a state [*majdhūb*]; only he could say such a thing. Had it been us, our throats would be slit."[5]

Shaikh Thānwī writes in the footnote:

> In some levels when one is overwhelmed by a state, utterances are categorized as ecstatic sayings and are thus forgiven. There are other overwhelmed ones who are temporally [not permanently] overwhelmed by their state.

## STORIES OF THE OVERWHELMED ONES

The stairs leading up to the Jāmi' Masjid in Delhi have always been home to one overwhelmed one or another. There are many famous incidents of these overwhelmed ones, but it is not known when they first settled there. There is a story of Mirza Maẓhar Jānijāna. He would go to Jāmi' Masjid for Jumu'a entering from the southern gate and leaving from the eastern. After Jumu'a, an elder would sit there on his prayer rug under the northern portico near the entrance of the eastern gate. He used to keep a small earthen jug covered with a weathered brick in front of him. Whenever Mirza Jānijāna passed by him, Mirza Jānijāna

would hit his legs, yell at him, pull the prayer rug from underneath him and throw it away. He would lift the jug and brick and smash both of them on the ground, shattering them into pieces and then walk off quietly. People were shocked that someone like Mirza Jānijāna could be so cruel, but no one had the courage to ask why he did it. Finally, someone once asked, "Shaikh, who is this person and why do you do this to him?" Mirza Ṣāḥib replied, "When we were kids he hung around us and tried to join our group. We would hit him and taunt him, but now Allah ﷻ has shown us the path of Sulūk and we have been given successorship by our mentors. One day, I thought, 'I have known him for so long and he is close to me, I should put some spiritual attention on him.' When I did, I found myself immersed in his own reflection and saw that he was higher than me. I became worried. After that, I became respectful to him and left my sitting place for him and told him, 'This is your place, not mine. Now you sit in my place and I will sit in yours.' But he refused to listen. When I insisted, he again refused and said, 'You will continue to treat me as you did when we were kids,' but I refused. After that, he took away all my spiritual properties and left me hollow. Now I was even more worried. I said, 'Give me back my spiritual properties.' He replied, 'On the condition that you will treat me as you always have and not here, but in public outside the masjid.' I had no choice but to accept his condition."[6]

In the footnote, Shaikh Thānwī writes:

> 'Took away all my spiritual properties'—I say that the method of this wresting away [of the spiritual properties] as I have heard from Shaikh Gangohī is that the faculty to understand and to perform good languishes, otherwise, it is not possible to eliminate someone's closeness to Allah ﷻ and their strength of spirituality. I say that this inertness can be produced by sickness or even medications. It is not harmful in itself except that one does not achieve the same edifying feelings in worship which leads to disappointment. However, it is harmful in the sense that it decreases one's spiritual energies to perform worship which leads to a decrease of good deeds. Therefore, wherever there is a possibility of a spiritual force [*taṣarruf*] influencing such changes, it will be forbidden; however, it is permissible where the spiritual properties become an obstruction in one's worldly or religious functions. Likewise, when it is for a permissible purpose, it will be permissible as in this incident.

## DRAWING FALSE ASSUMPTIONS

I was a member of the Darul al-ʿUlūm [Deoband] board for many years. Shaikh Madanī's attitude towards Ḥakīm Isḥāq Kāthurwī was harsher than this. At first, I was quite perturbed by what I saw, but after a few days I understood what was happening.

One thing leads to another, but I meant to narrate an incident of an overwhelmed one who lived on this flight of stairs in Delhi. He was very pious and righteous. One day he began loudly ranting, "I am not your servant and you are not my lord." People grabbed him and took him to the judge who was himself a pious and devout man. He asked the overwhelmed one, "What are you saying?" He replied, "Satan has been trying to prevail over me and force me to say, 'You are my Creator and I am your servant,' but I reject him saying, 'Neither are you my Creator nor am I your servant.'

The purpose of narrating these incidents is to remind us that we should not draw conclusions on the ecstatic phrases until we are sure of what they mean.

## ENDNOTES

1 Muslim, *fi al-Haḍ ʿala al-Tauba*

2 Bukhārī, *Taʿdīl al-Nisā*

3 Musnad Aḥmad, *Ḥadīth al-Sayyida ʿĀisha*

4 Yaʿqūb ibn Mamlūk ibn Aḥmad ʿAlī (1831/32-1884)- was from the lineage of Abū Bakr ﵁. Known for his clairvoyances and overwhelming spiritual states, he often accurately predicted events before they transpired and was known for the acceptance of his duʿās. He was a teacher of Maulānā Ashraf ʿAlī Thānwī who often said that no one shaped his thinking and personality as much as Shaikh Nānautwī.

5 *Ārwāḥ-e-Thalātha* [# 249]

6 Mirza Janijāna's ill-treatment of this shaikh was an example of an ecstatic action [*shatḥ*].

السابع عشر

## Chapter Seventeen

# Intoxication and Unconsciousness

### THE CAUSES BEHIND ECSTATIC PHRASES

*At times,* intoxication and unconsciousness may induce ecstatic phrases. Many of the sayings and states of the masters of Sulūk are uttered in the state of intoxication. The intoxication is forbidden if it is induced by a forbidden act. However, sometimes intoxication happens when a powerful spiritual meaning descends upon the heart while the heart is too weak to sustain it [though a weak heart is not the only reason for intoxication]. At times, even a strong heart is overcome by the descent of a spiritual meaning that is stronger than itself and the force of the descent makes one fall unconscious. Mūsā was strong of character, but when he asked Allah to reveal Himself and Allah manifested Himself in His revelation, Mūsā fell unconscious. Comparatively, the Blessed Prophet's spiritual forbearance exceeded Mūsā's because the Blessed Prophet had attained union with Jibra'īl [in spiritual attributes when Jibra'īl squeezed him three times] when he received his first revelation; only Allah knows best what gnosis and perpetual states he attained during the next thirteen years. Thus, when the Blessed Prophet ascended the heavens in the ascension, he left Jibra'īl behind.

Whatever extraordinary things the Blessed Prophet experienced and saw in the ascension did not bring any change, transformation, or disintegration of his blessed body. He returned in the same state in which he ascended.

Shaikh Thānwī writes in *al-Takashshuf*:

> Unconsciousness can result from forceful blows on the soul as it does by blows on the physical body. This is something all the traditional doctors agree upon. Many different states of the soul can affect changes in the mind, and one of these is when intoxication stuns the mind bringing on unconsciousness. As an insane or unconscious person is excused, likewise a spiritually intoxicated person or one overwhelmed by a spiritual state is also excused in his ecstatic phrases, transgressions, and negligence towards obligatory duties. Many times, this intoxication is not realized by a person sitting nearby just as an insane person's insanity is not noticeable. As a result, people are sometimes accusatory and judgmental of a person's conduct or utterances. When we interpret the actions of people [that excuses them from the obligatory act] it is with the understanding that such people are otherwise virtuous, of the best character, and strict followers of the Sunna. The only time we will not excuse a person is when he is a transgressor, a slave of his desires, and leads a life of sin; in this case, there is no need to interpret his actions or sayings, and the chances of such a person being overwhelmed by spiritual intoxication is little unless strong evidence suggests otherwise.

In *al-Takashshuf*, Shaikh Thānwī footnoted the hadith which narrates the incident of how 'Umar ؓ once tried to stop the Blessed Prophet ﷺ from leading the funeral prayers of 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubai ibn Sulūl [chief of the hypocrites] and says:

> Intoxication is the name of an inability to distinguish between rulings related to the exoteric and esoteric because of the torrents of a strong spiritual meaning descending into the heart; sobriety [*ṣaḥw*] is the return of this ability. The descent of the spiritual meaning of hatred for the sake of Allah ﷻ [*bughḍ fi Allah* ﷻ] overpowered 'Umar ؓ and he became overwhelmed by it; he was not conscious of his behavior and the words he used with the Blessed Prophet ﷺ appeared as an apparent lack of respect on his part. In this situation, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ did not hold him accountable for his behavior. Then when he returned to his normal state of mind, it is narrated in the hadith that he said, 'I was appalled by my behavior with the

> Blessed Prophet ﷺ.' These types of descents of spiritual meanings are common amongst the sufis. If the descent of the meaning is weak and the heart is able to withstand it, the effect is unnoticeable, but if it is strong and the heart is strained, the effect becomes apparent.

I remember the incident of Shaikh Faḍl al-Raḥmān Ganj Murādabādī, but can't remember where I read it. It is written in *Tadhkirat al-Rashīd* that once in his gathering, people were talking about the biographies of the elders when the name of Shaikh Gangohī came up. At the time, Shaikh Faḍl al-Raḥman said, "Don't even talk about him, he drank up the whole river and didn't even burp."[1]

Ibn Taimiyya writes in his fatwas:[2]

> Sometimes people overcome by a certain state are subdued by the spiritual property of union [*ittiḥād*] or incarnation [*ḥulūl*]. Some forms of union are truth while others are purely falsehood. However, since such feelings usually emerge when a person is subdued by a certain state, is unconscious, or is repudiating the existence of everything around him except his beloved, and his infatuation is with nothing forbidden, he will not be accountable for his actions. There will be no punishment for him on the Day of Judgment because an insane person is exempt from the law. If this person is mistaken in what he says then he will fall under the aya, '*O Lord, do not hold us accountable, if we forget or make a mistake*.'[3] and under the aya, '*There is no sin on you in the mistake you make*.'[4]

The example of this is like the story narrated about one person who loved someone. When the beloved fell in the river, the lover threw himself behind him in the river also. The beloved asked, 'I fell accidentally, but what made you fall?' The lover replied, 'In my love for you, I lost sight of myself and thought you were me.'

This state occurs often among the people of love and also among the seekers with their mentors. It is a state that is most often born out of love for Allah ﷻ; however, there can be some imperfection in the attainment of this union with Allah ﷻ. In this state, one becomes so absorbed in his love for his beloved [i.e., Allah ﷻ] that he loses consciousness of his own love and even reaching a level of self-annihilation. He cannot distinguish remembrance from the one being remembered, observation from the one

being observed, and presence from the one who is omnipresent. In this condition, one loses awareness of one's own existence. In this condition, a person may say, I am the Truth' or 'I am Glorified' or other such delirious statements. Such a person is intoxicated with love of Allah ﷻ. Since the intoxication was not caused by something forbidden therefore such utterances born from this spiritual condition should never be publicized.

## ENDNOTES

1 He absorbed the descent of powerful spiritual meanings [due to his high perpetual state] without any change in his consciousness or utterances.

2 *Fatāwa Ibn Taimiyya* 2/396

3 2: 286

4 33:5

الثامن عشر

Chapter Eighteen

# Esoteric Utterances of the Sufis

## THE TRUE MEANING BEHIND THE WORDS OF THE WISE

*The exoteric meanings* of the utterances of the sufis often conceal their true inner meanings. Because of this, some foolish people not learned in the esoterica of this science make false objections. In *Shamā'il al-Tirmidhī*, Anas ﷺ narrates,

> Once a man came to Blessed Prophet ﷺ and asked for a mount. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, 'I will give you the calf [of a camel].' The man said, 'O Blessed Prophet ﷺ, what am I going to do with a calf? I need something to ride on.' The Blessed Prophet ﷺ explained, 'Every camel is a calf of a camel.'[1]

In another hadith in *Shamā'il*, Ḥasan Baṣrī says, "Once, an old woman came to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and said, 'Pray for me that Allah ﷻ blesses me with Paradise.' The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, 'Old women will not enter Paradise.' When she turned away crying, he said, 'Tell her she will not enter Paradise as an old woman; Allah ﷻ will make all women young and virginal before He puts them into Paradise."[2]

This meaning is also conveyed in the aya, '*Surely, We have made up those females in a special creation, and have made them virgins.*'[3] This aya

indicates that the women of Paradise will always remain virgins as they will become virginal after every intercourse.

Abū Huraira ﵁ narrates that he once went to the market and said to the people, "I see you people here when the inheritance of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ is being distributed in the masjid." People ran to the masjid, but came back a short while later. They said, "We didn't see anything being distributed. We only saw a group of people reciting the Qur'an." He said, "This is the inheritance of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ."[4]

Shaikh Thānwī writes in *al-Takashshuf*:

> Most of the speeches and writings of the elders contain some articles that are outside the realm of the apparent meaning. This hidden meaning only becomes coherent once the intended meaning and its explanation are understood. There are various reasons for withholding the real meaning: being overwhelmed by a spiritual state, concealment from the public, motivating the addressee because concealing something provokes one to specify whatever is being concealed, and the thing which is specified by provocation engenders a stronger impression on the heart.

The narration of Abū Huraira ﵁ corroborates this point. Abū Huraira ﵁ at first concealed the true meaning with intention to motivate the people by using an irrelevant explicit meaning. Concealing the true meaning led people to believe the apparent meaning. This is why they returned complaining they did not see anything being distributed. After he explained the real meaning, they understood what he actually meant. Thus, one should not criticize a spiritual mentor while he is in a state because it is truly one's own loss.

Also, Ubai ibn Ka'b ﵁ narrates, "One Companion ﵁ from amongst the Helpers lived far from Madina, but he never missed even one ṣalāt behind the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. We pitied him and I said, 'It would be so good if you bought yourself a mount that would save you from the hot stones and pebbles, and protect you against the predatory creatures of the earth.' He replied, 'I wouldn't even want my house to be next to the Blessed Prophet's ﷺ house.' I was upset at this response. I went to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and complained about him. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ called him. The Companion ﵁ said the same to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and added, 'I hope that Allah ﷻ will reward me for each step I take to the masjid.' The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said to him, 'You will get what you intended from Allah ﷻ.'"[5]

Shaikh Thānwī says:

> The same commentary applies here that applied to the former hadith. Notice that the words of the Companion ﷺ were disrespectful and upset Ubai ibn Kaʿb ﷺ. We can understand that he may have said what he did to hide his true intentions or for other similar reasons. Since there was nothing to hide from the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, he revealed his true intentions to him and it became clear that the outward meaning of what he had said earlier to Ubai ibn Kaʿb ﷺ was not intended.

In a glorified hadith [*hadīth al-qudusī*], Abū Huraira ﷺ narrates that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said:

> On the Day of Judgment, Allah ﷻ will say to some people, 'I was sick, you did not visit Me.' The person will say, 'O my Creator, how can I visit you? You are Provider of the Universe.' Allah ﷻ will say, 'Do you not remember so-and-so person became sick and you did not visit him? Do you not know that if you had visited you would find Me there?'" Then Allah ﷻ will say, "I asked you for food and drink," and the person will respond, 'Oh my Creator, How can I feed You and quench Your thirst, You are Provider of the Universe?' Allah ﷻ will respond, "You would have found Me there if you had fed him and quenched his thirst."[223]

This hadith and the previous examples indicate that such statements are figurative and cannot be taken literally otherwise our beliefs would be corrupted. There are numerous ayas of this kind in the Qur'an. To present a few:

> *Then an announcer shouted out, "O people of the caravan, you are thieves!"*[6]
>
> *So I wanted to make it defective, as there was a king across them who used to usurp every boat by force.*[7]
>
> *They* [*the opponents of Īsā* ﷺ] *devised a plan, and Allah* ﷻ *devised a plan.*[8]

## ENDNOTES

1 Shamāil, *Innā Ḥāmiluka ʿalā Walad*

2 Ibid, *al-Jannat lā Tadkhuluhā ʿUjūz*

3 56:35-36

4 *Muʿjam al-Ausaṭ*, 2/114

5 Muslim, *Faḍl Kathrat al-Khuṭā'*

6 Muslim, *Faḍl ʿIyādat al-Marīḍ*

7 12:70

8 18:79

9 3:54

التَّاسِعَ عَشَرَ

Chapter Nineteen

# The Mother of all Diseases: Arrogance

## The Dangers of Arrogance

*My plan* was to address various issues and I had many points in mind, but since arriving in Madina, my health has deteriorated. I was bedridden in India and was hoping that things would get better after arriving in Madina, however since arriving in Madina I haven't improved any. Many times I felt like ending this book, but changed my mind on the insistence of my friends. Due to sickness, I could not write anything for days on end, and now as my health has declined, I have decided to end this topic with two important discussions.

From the very beginning, it was my intention to complete Shariʿa and Ṭarīqa with these two topics. One was the topic of arrogance, the mother of all diseases. The second was the topic of debasing the friends of Allah ﷻ [*auliyā Allāh*]. I borrowed the term 'the mother of all diseases' from my good friend Sufi Iqbāl who wrote the book, *Arrogance: The Mother of All Diseases*. The first edition sold out soon after publication and now the second edition is on the way. I thought I would give him to write on this topic but my friends explained that every writer has his own writing style, and it would be best that I write on this topic myself.

Many years ago, I wrote that there are two types of sins, the satanic sins and the bestial sins. In the article, I mentioned that the

bestial sins are quickly forgiven by the mercy of Allah ﷻ. The hadith is well-known:

مَنْ مَاتَ مِنْ أُمَّتِي لَا يُشْرِكُ بِاللّٰهِ شَيْئًا دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللّٰهِ وَإِنْ زَنٰى وَإِنْ سَرَقَ قَالَ وَإِنْ زَنٰى وَإِنْ سَرَقَ

> Whoever dies in my umma without associating with Allah ﷻ will enter Paradise. I [Abū Dharr ؓ] said, 'O Blessed Prophet ﷺ! Even if he fornicates and steals?' He said, 'Even if he fornicates and steals.'[1]

I supported the point about the two types of sins with the Qur'an and Sunna. It has always been my habit to show my work to my friends, especially Shaikh 'Abd al-Raḥmān and Qārī Sa'īd. On occasion, they mark off whole paragraphs and I would argue with them about it, but finally give in to them. They would delete anything unworthy of being published.

I don't remember which manuscript it was, but they argued that it did not emphasize the importance of the satanic sins enough and at the same time lacked mention of the bestial sins.

I was unable to include this topic in my other books, but I think the topic of arrogance befits this book considering that it is the most dangerous of the spiritual diseases, not in my opinion only, but also as stated in the Qur'an and Sunna. But in Taṣawwuf, it is considered the most destructive. Imam Ghazālī dedicates a whole chapter to this subject in his book *Iḥyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn.* He writes:

> Allah ﷻ warns of the dangers of arrogance in many ayas of Qur'an. In one aya, He says, "*I shall turn from My ayas those who behave arrogantly on the earth without a right.*"[2] In another aya, "*Thus, does Allah ﷻ seal the heart of every arrogant, tyrant.*"[3] In another aya, "*Truly, He likes not the proud.*"[4] In yet another aya Allah ﷻ says, *"And your Lord said, 'Invoke me, I will respond to your invocation. Verily! Those who scorn My worship, they will enter Hell in humiliation.*"[5]
>
> The evil effects of arrogance are also mentioned repeatedly in the Qur'an. In addition, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said in a hadith, "He who has a grain of arrogance in his heart will not enter the Paradise.' In another hadith Abū Huraira ؓ narrates that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said that Allah ﷻ says, "Pride is My shawl and Greatness

is my *izār* (lower garment). I will throw in the Hellfire anyone who tries to snatch these away from Me and will not fear the consequences." In another hadith the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah ﷻ will throw into the Hellfire facedown anyone with a grain of arrogance of his heart."[6] In another hadith the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "A person exalts himself until he is written amongst the ruthless ones [*jabbārīn*] and will suffer the same punishment as them." In another hadith he says, "On the Day of Judgment, a neck with two ears by which it will hear, two eyes by which it will see and a tongue by which it will speak will emerge from the Hellfire. It will say, 'three men are mine: every arrogant man, the person who associated with Allah ﷻ, and the one who made pictures.'" The Blessed Prophet ﷺ also said, "The Hellfire and Paradise had a debate. The Hellfire said, 'The arrogant and cruel ones have been chosen for me.' Paradise will say, 'The poor, weak, and obscure people are my lot.'"

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ also said, "When he was on his deathbed, Nūḥ ؑ called both his sons and said, 'I enjoin two things upon you and forbid you two things.'" The two forbidden things are associating others with Allah ﷻ and arrogance. Abū Huraira ؓ narrates that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "The tyrants and arrogant ones will be reduced to the size of ants and people will crush them under their feet."

Imam Ghazālī quotes many ayas of the Qur'an and aḥādīth regarding the evils of arrogance. Below, I narrate a few more:

Abū Bakr ؓ said, "I do not ever look down upon a Muslim because even a small Muslim is great in the sight of Allah ﷻ."

Dhahab said, "When Allah ﷻ created the Garden of Eden, He addressed it thus, 'You are forbidden for every arrogant person.'"

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah ﷻ will not look at the person who drags his lower garment on the ground out of arrogance." The Blessed Prophet ﷺ, "A man was walking arrogantly, his two shawls wrapped around him, when Allah ﷻ pressed him into the earth and he will continue to suffer this punishment until the Day of Judgment."

Miṭraf ibn ʿAbd Allāh saw Muhallab walking arrogantly in a silk cloth. Miṭraf said, "O servant of Allah ﷻ! This walk of yours is disliked by Allah ﷻ and His Blessed Prophet ﷺ." Muhallab said, "Do

you even know who I am?" Miṭraf replied, "Yes, I know you very well. Your beginning was a drop of semen and your end is a decomposed body and between these two stages you carry filth in your stomach." Muhallab left his haughtiness and walked off.

'Umar said, "When a person is humble, Allah raises his status and says to him, 'be elevated', and when a person is arrogant He disgraces him and says, 'You are vile.' Then such a person reaches such a level that though he thinks highly of himself, he is most contemptible to the people and they think worse of him than swine."

Mālik ibn Dīnār says, "If somebody ever came to the entrance of a masjid and announced, 'I want the worst of you to leave the masjid' I swear by Allah you will not find anyone leaving the masjid faster than myself."

When ʿAbd Allāh ibn Mubārak heard this statement of Mālik ibn Dīnār he said, "This is what made Mālik a *mālik* (king)."[7]

My friend, Sufi Iqbāl in his book, *Akābir kā Sulūk,* narrates that Shaikh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī said,

> In the past, the elders put their students through difficult exercises in order to eliminate their spiritual diseases. However, the later scholars, especially the elders of our line [Chishtiyya], prefer that one perform so much dhikr that the spiritual diseases [of the heart] are eliminated and the effects of the dhikr permeates into every aspect of one's life.
>
> There are many spiritual diseases but most have boiled it down to ten, the root cause of all ten being arrogance. If this one disease is eliminated, the rest will leave on their own.
>
> One man stayed with Junaid Bahgdādī for 20 years. One day he said, "I have been with you for so many years but I feel like I have gained nothing from you." This man was the chief of his tribe. Junaid Baghdādī realized that he had arrogance in his heart. He said, "Listen, do one thing. Take a basket of walnuts and sit outside the door of the sanctum and announce, 'I will give one walnut for the person who hits me once on the head with his shoe and two walnuts if he hits me twice' and so on and so forth. Do this until the until the basket is empty and then come to me." The man exclaimed, "*Lā ilāha illallāh Muḥammud rasūlullāh*! Haḍrat, I can't do that." Junaid Baghdādī replied, "This *kalima* is most blessed. If one reads it with conviction after living his whole life in disbelief, he will become a

true believer. But saying this, you have rejected the path of Ṭarīqa. Get out of here. You will not gain anything from me."

After this incident, Junaid Baghdādī narrated the incident of a man who spent many years with his mentor and complained about the condition of his heart that he did not see any improvement in himself. The mentor asked, "What do you mean by improvement?" The man said, "I will pass on the blessings I gain from you." The shaikh said, "This is your problem; you want to become a shaikh. Get rid of this evil intention from your heart and know that we are obligated to be grateful to Allah ﷻ for all His blessings. The people who perform dhikr and devotions to profit from them in this way [i.e. to become a shaikh] are foolish. Their intention is corrupted. How is such a person going to benefit and gain a reward? His very existence and then the eyes, nose, ears, tongue, and the five senses, and all that Allah ﷻ has given us; we must fulfill our obligation to Him before we think about other rewards and benefits."

## THE DECEPTION OF SATAN

Since the path of Ṭarīqa is the path of success and salvation, Satan aims to thwart the efforts and advancement of anyone on this path. He does not stop the student on this path when he performs a lot of worship, fears Allah ﷻ and avoids major sins, but instead cultivates the seed of arrogance in his heart and puts to waste his piety and good deeds. In *Ikmāl al-Shiyam,* it is written,

> Whoever claims to be humble is actually arrogant because one can only claim humility when he has observed the loftiness of his rank. Thus, when he claims to be humble it is as if he has observed his greatness, therefore he is arrogant.

## TRUE HUMILITY

In summary, the reality of humility is that one feels himself so wretched that the level of his rank never even crosses his mind. He considers himself vile from head to toe. If a person truly feels this way about himself, he will

never make any claims, neither that of humility or any other righteous quality because such a claim indicates he recognizes his high status.

In reality, humility is not performing a humble act and thinking oneself humble. True humility is that when an humble act is done, the person thinks it above himself to perform such a deed. Most people think that any act of piety or humility proves one is humble. For example, if a rich man helps someone who is poor people will say, "What a humble man" though he is extremely arrogant. This is why the author [of *Ikmāl al-Shiyam*] explains that the way to differentiate humility from non-humility is not by looking for a humble act, especially when one thinks it below himself to do such a thing. For example, if someone leaves his chair to sit on a rug, and thinks it below himself to sit on a rug due to his self-importance and thinks that he should be on the chair, then this person is actually arrogant. A truly humble person is that he sits on the rug but does not even think himself worthy of sitting on a rug; in fact, he thinks he should be on the bare floor. Another example: he gives money to a poor man and feels honored that the poor man accepted his gift when it was unworthy of acceptance. This is a sign of true humility.

Though I wished to write more and the discussion is long, I was forced to cut it short due to my sickness. The disease of arrogance is dangerous in Shari'a but is even more dangerous in Ṭarīqa. I saw that it was the habit of the elders that if the idea of successorship crossed a student's mind, they would not give him successorship though he had attained the nisba of Allah ﷻ. They also warned the student, who after receiving successorship, showed signs of arrogance. If such a student rectified his condition then well and good otherwise they annulled his successorship. I saw many people who were successors of the greatest of our elders and who performed a lot of dhikr and devotions, fall because of arrogance. In fact, one must be more cautious after gaining successorship of becoming arrogant. Even if such a successor's successorship is not annulled few of his students ever attain the nisba of Allah ﷻ and his line does not endure. May Allah by His beneficence and Mercy save my friends and myself from this dangerous spiritual disease. It is indeed a serious matter.

Though arrogance is deadly it is not the only disease of the heart that is dangerous. All spiritual diseases are dangerous and one must be vigilant of falling victim to anyone of them. For example, vanity [*'ujb*] must be avoided since it is no less dangerous than arrogance. The Ṣaḥāba ﷺ suffered in the battle of Ḥunain due to vanity though the Blessed Prophet ﷺ himself participated in this battle and stood in the front lines.

The incident of the battle of Ḥunain is mentioned in the beginning of Sūrat al-Tauba and is summarized in *Bayān al-Qur'an*. Allah ﷻ says,

> Truly Allah ﷻ has given you victory on many battlefields and on the Day of Ḥunain when you rejoiced at your great number but it availed you not and the earth, vast as it is, was straitened for you, then you turned back in flight. Then Allah ﷻ sent down his *sakīna* (tranquility) on the believers and sent down forces which you saw not, and punished the disbelievers. Such is the recompense of disbelievers.[8]

In the war against the apostates, Khālid ibn Walīd ؓ said, "People face tribulations due to their utterances." The first battle against the apostates was against the false prophet, Ṭulaiḥa Asadī. Many of Ṭulaiḥa's men were killed but most ran away, including Ṭulaiḥa himself. This boosted the confidence of the Muslims. After that, the Muslims came against the false prophet, Musailima and found him to be fierce and relentless. The number of Muslims martyred was the same as apostates that were killed in the battle of Mūta. Khālid ibn Walīd ؓ was the general of the Muslim army. He says,

> When we finished off with Ṭulaiḥa and found him weakly and a coward the words, "Who is Banū Ḥanīfa [the tribe of Musailima]? They are no better than the fools we just dealt with" came out of my tongue, and hardship strikes us through our own words. When we came against them we found none like them. They fought us continuously from sunrise to ʿAṣr.

Khālid ؓ admits that his statement exacerbated the situation. Likewise, whenever the righteous caliphs congratulated an army on their victory, they advised them to be careful of vanity. Many incidents of this kind are mentioned in *al-Iʿtidāl.*

On the other hand, Allah ﷻ loves humility which was the outstanding trait of all the prophets and the friends of Allah ﷻ. When the embodiment of humility, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ, entered Makka on the day of the conquest of Makka, he bowed his head so low it touched his saddle. It was due to this humility that the worst enemies of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ became his devout followers. They realized that the Blessed Prophet ﷺ was a mercy and symbol of love of Allah ﷻ. He does not

fight for territory or power but came only to give us the blessing of īmān and Islam.

Shaikh Ḥusain Madanī writes in *Asīrān-e-Mālta*,

> Shaikh al-Hind Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan loved the company of the poor common folk. He wished to make his habits, his clothes, his lifestyle like that of the poor people and was afraid of the worldly, rich and pompous people. He stayed in the company of the students of the school[9] and preferred sitting in the third-class section of the train though he was also particular about cleanliness. He always kept some camphor with him while travelling since the odors and dirty clothing of the common folk upset him. He loved the smell of perfume oils, especially rose. He also loved simplicity and keeping company with simple people and despised formalities and superficiality. He always quoted Shaikh Qāsim Nānautwī who said, "The public bathrooms are also a blessing. And though the bathrooms of the rich are fragrant and clean, they are an in actual fact, an abomination."

## THE OBSESSION OF THE SELF

The self is obsessed with its greatness. Its desire to see itself the center of all creation is precisely the cause of all evils and the reason behind the downfall of one's worldly life and Hereafter. For this reason, the elders crush the urge of the self which looks for praise and strives for self-importance, and are eager to find ways and conditions in which the wanting of their self is suppressed and humiliated, especially in public.

The putrid smell of the physical things is nothing compared to the foul odors of the spiritual impurities. Attending to the call of nature increases the self-importance of the rich [because of the comforts, fragrant smell, and layout of their bathrooms] while increasing the humility and contempt for the self amongst the common people. It reminds one of his own reality. When this is the state of our inner, one can analogize it with everything else such as our properties, our conduct with others, and our possessions etc.

The jurists write that it is more virtuous to perform ablution from a shallow reservoir [that is made inside many of the masājid for performing ablution] because it opposes the Muʿtazilites[10]; though it is not written anywhere that the Muʿtazilites ever opposed ablution from a shallow reservoir.

As far as I can understand, ablution from a shallow reservoir grates the self because one is going to rinse his mouth from the same place where another previously washed his feet. This is why people who possess the self that inclines towards evil [*al-nafs al-ammāra*] and worldly people find it loathsome to perform ablution from a public reservoir. This is probably the reason behind the virtue of performing ablution from a shallow reservoir.

The reality is that both Shaikh Qāsim Nānautwī and Shaikh al-Hind always looked for ways to spite themselves, to suppress their self, and establish humility in themselves. They abhorred places where arrogance, vanity, fame, greatness, and self-importance were fostered and were they could easily fall victim to the self. They didn't just talk self-deprecatingly of themselves as we do. We say [in Urdu] *kamtarīne khalā'iq* (the worst of creation), *sagge dunyā* (a dog of the world), *dharre bi miqdār* (a worthless granule), *nābkār* (useless), *nangī khalā'iq* (the lowest class of creation) and ascribe other such epithets to ourselves. But this is all sanctimoniousness because the meanings of these epithets bare no relation to the condition of our hearts. In fact, we think quite the opposite of ourselves, our state is *hamm chuman dīgre naist* (we are everything, nothing but us exists). Because of this we observe others faults and criticize and backbite them. If we ever hear praise of our contemporaries, a fire begins to burn in our hearts and we begin to find faults in them and relegate them in front of others. We are enraged if anyone ever calls us illiterate, useless, an ass, a dog, or even a pig. If we were true to the epithets we ascribe to ourselves like *kamtarīne khalā'iq* (the worst of creation) then why are we so offended when someone insults us and calls us a dog or a pig? After all, they too are creation aren't they?

Many times I faced difficulties not for something I said, but due to arrogant and vain thoughts that crossed my mind.

## THE HARDSHIPS ARROGANT THOUGHTS BRING ON US

In 1382/1961 the student uprising in Maẓāhir al-'Ulūm [one of the schools established by the elders of Deoband in Sahāranpūr, India] completely crushed my desire to teach and I never taught after that. The inciters of the uprising employed every possible method to close down the school: lying, false oaths, and deception. I truly believe the axiom that 'whatever tribulation befalls you is the fruit of your own misdeeds'.[11] Our own evils are the root cause of all the tribulations we face in this world though the apparent

causes may seem otherwise as Khālid ibn Walīd ﷺ said, 'hardship comes by what we say'. Here are some of the realities behind the uprising that became clear to me much later:

1 Approximately one week before the uprising, the topic of protests and uprisings came up in one of the classes and the teacher said, "There can never be an uprising in Maẓāhir."

2 The seed of the uprising was first sowed in one of the campus buildings. A nonbeliever instigated one of the students and said, "If you students unify the teachers and school can do nothing to you." This same student gathered all the students once the gate of the campus building had been closed and delivered a fiery speech. When I found out about this in the morning, I called on the supervisor and told him the seriousness of the matter but he downplayed it saying, "Don't worry, he can't do anything. I will go and straighten him up right now." I again explained the seriousness of the situation but he was headstrong and took the matter lightly.

3 When the uprising gathered force and made its way into the main buildings of the school, we [the board members] held an emergency meeting and I proclaimed, "Not one student from the final year [who were taught the books of hadith by Shaikh al-Ḥadīth Muḥammud Zakariyyā] is involved in the uprising." The assistant principal, Shaikh 'Abd al-Majīd quietly uttered, "Ḥaḍrat, there are also students from the final year." This fool [Shaikh Zakariyyā is referring to himself] repeated the same thing but more forcefully that, "It is not possible for any of the final year students to be involved in this uprising." We later learned that almost all the final year students were involved in the uprising. Even more shocking was the fact that one of my closest students who was also the personal helper of the principal of the school and whom we confided with on this matter, also played a major role in the uprising.

The reason I was so adamant that the final year students could not be involved in the uprising was that I always stressed upon them the loftines of their position, that they were representatives of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and that they would one day be leaders of the Muslims. In *Bukhārī* class, I drove home this point in each class from the beginning of the year and naively

thought that they had absorbed the message. But when I saw that just about every student from the final year was involved, the following poem came to my lips:

*Why doesn't the one deprived of the fulfillment of his desire*
*Look into the sleeping skies*
*That he sees himself failing at every step*

Even now, whenever the scenes of the uprising play out before my eyes, I see it a result of my own failing. If I had any sincerity, I would have had some effect on my students. Before the uprising, when any riot or protest broke out in a school and the students told us of the abuses against them we would empathize with the students. However, after the riots in Maẓāhir, my sympathies are always with the administration and teachers. The uprising of Maẓāhir left a ugly scar in my heart. May Allah ﷻ protect me from this arrogance, the mother of all diseases which can bring down the best of people.

## ARROGANCE WORKS HAVOC ON THE HEART

I have seen many of the great mentors of the past fall due to arrogance and the story of Abū 'Abd Allāh Andalūsī is so deeply embedded in my mind it usually finds its way into my writings. I wish that the students of this path and those interested in Taṣawwuf also make it a reminder for themselves and take heed from it. Shaikh Abū 'Abd Allāh Andalūsī was one of the elders of the elders of Taṣawwuf. Many sanctums and schools ran under him and he had thousands of students in Taṣawwuf and Shari'a. This incident took place two-hundred years after the demise of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ and the effects of the golden era still could be observed. It is said that he had twelve-thousand students. Once, he went on a journey accompanied by great shaikhs the like of Junaid Baghdādī and Shiblī. Shiblī says:

> Our caravan was moving peacefully with the blessings of Allah ﷻ. Then we came to pass by a Christian village. Little time was left for ṣalāt and we could not find any water in the village. A small well lay in the outskirts of the village where some girls had gathered to fill their buckets with water. The minute the shaikh saw of one of the

girls his condition changed. He bowed his head and stopped eating, drinking, and talking to anyone for three whole days.

We became worried and concerned for his welfare. On the third day, I gathered the courage and asked, "O shaikh, thousands of your students are worried about your condition." The shaikh turned toward everyone and addressed them thus: "My friends, how long am I going to hide my condition from you. I saw one of the girls and fell in love with her. My love for her has permeated every limb of my body. Now I can never leave here." I replied, "O shaikh, you are the shaikh of Iraq and are renowned for your austerity, your piety and your wealth of knowledge. The number of your students exceeds twelve-thousand. By the Qur'an, I beg that you not disgrace us and everyone here." The shaikh responded, "My friend, your fate and mine is predestined by Allah ﷻ. Allah ﷻ has taken away His guidance from me and removed the gift of my closeness with Him." Saying this he began to cry and then said, "O my people, my destiny is being fulfilled, nothing is in my control."

We were struck by his words and we cried in anguish. The shaikh began to cry with us and soon the dirt became wet with the flood of our tears. After this, we had no choice but to return to Baghdad. The shaikh's students in Baghdad were devastated upon hearing about their shaikh and some died of grief and shock. Most of them began entreating Allah ﷻ, "O Changer of hearts, guide the shaikh and return him to his post." After this, all the sanctums were shut down and a year went by in anguish and pain without our shaikh. Then, we decided to make a trip to that village and find out about his condition and to see how he was doing. As we reached the village, we asked about the whereabouts of our shaikh. They told us, "He is tending to the pigs in the jungle." We were agonized. "O Allah ﷻ, what is happening to our shaikh?" The village people explained, "The shaikh was engaged to the daughter of our chief. Her father accepted the engagement under this condition [i.e. he would tend to the pigs]." We were grief-stricken and could have drowned in our sorrow and grief. Tears flowed from our eyes and we could barely control our emotions as we find our way to the jungle where the shaikh was tending the pigs. Then we saw our shaikh. He was wearing a Christian cap and a girdle around his waist. He was leaning on the stick which he leaned on in his sermons and talks, and was keeping an eye on the pigs. The scene was like salt on our wounds. When he saw us walking toward him he put his head down. When

we came close enough for him to hear, we said, "Al-salāmu 'alaikum." He soflty replied, "wa 'alaikum al-salām." I said, "Shaikh, look at you after all that knowledge, the great position you held and the hadith and Qur'an." The shaikh replied, "O my brothers, I am not in my control, my Creator did as He wished with me and after bringing me so close, He threw me away from His door. How can anyone avoid what is destined for him? O my friends, fear the wrath of Allah ﷻ, don't ever become arrogant over your knowledge and status." Then he looked towards the sky and said, "O my *Maulā* (Creator), I did not think You would throw me from Your door." Saying this, he began to cry and sought guidance from Allah ﷻ and said, "O Shiblī, learn from others!" I cried and supplicated, "O our Sustainer, we ask none but You for help and we put our trust in You. Please remove this trial from us as none but You has the power to do so."

The pigs began squealing upon hearing our cries and entreating with Allah ﷻ. The shaikh also wept and cried. I said, "Shaikh, you were a *ḥāfiẓ* (memorizer) of Qur'an and recited Qur'an in the seven recitations. Do you remember anything now?" He replied, "I remember nothing but two ayas,

وَمَنْ يُهِنِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُكْرِمٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ

*And whomsoever Allah ﷻ disgraces, none can honor Him. Verily! Allah ﷻ does what He wills.*[12]

وَمَنْ يَتَبَدَّلِ الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ

*And He who changes faith for disbelief, Verily, He has gone astray from the Right way."*[13]

I asked, "O shaikh, you knew thirty-thousand aḥādīth with the chains of transmission and could recall them instantly. Do you still remember any of those aḥādīth?" He replied, "I only remember one hadith,

مَنْ بَدَّلَ دِينَهُ فَاقْتُلُوهُ

Whoever changes his faith, execute him."[14]

> After this, we decided to return to Baghdad. We had only traveled a short distance when we suddenly saw the shaikh on the third day emerging from the bank of a river after taking a bath. He was loudly saying the *kalima,*
>
> اَشْهَدُ اَنْ لَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَاَشْهَدُ اَنَّ مُحَمَّدً رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ
>
> Only he would understand our joy at that moment who saw and felt our pain and anguish before this. Afterwards, we asked the shaikh, "Was there any reason behind all this?" The shaikh replied, "Yes, when we stopped by the village we passed by many temples and churches. When I saw the fire-worshippers and Christians associating others with Allah ﷻ I became arrogant and thought, "We are true believers and believers in the one Creator. Look at these ignorant and foolish people worshipping inanimate beings." Immediately, I heard a voice from the unseen saying, "Your faith and belief in the oneness of Allah ﷻ is not through your efforts, but by Our will. Do you think your īmān is in your hands that you look down upon others? If you wish We will prove it to you right now [that īmān is by My will]. At that moment, I felt as if a bird flew from my heart which in reality was my īmān."

In this story, the main point of narrating this whole incident was the last part about how arrogance became the cause of the shaikh's misery and loss of īmān. This incident has also been narrated in *Āp Bītī* and in *Akābir kā Sulūk* by Sufi Iqbāl. Ḥakīm Ilyās has also written a book based on this incident by the name, *Shaikh Andalūsī kā Aik 'Ajīb aur Gharīb 'Ibratnāk Wāqi'a.* This arrogance is so dangerous that it even brought down one of the elder of the elders. May Allah ﷻ by His grace and mercy save us from this deadly disease. *Āmīn.*

## ENDNOTES

1 Bukhārī, *Man Ajāba bi Labbaika wa Ṣa'daika*

2 7:146

3 40:35

4 16:23

5 40: 60

6 *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, 3/534

7 *Iḥyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn*

8 9:25-26

9 In the following pages, school refers to the traditional Islamic schools or *madrasas*

10 Also known as the Rationalists, they first introduced the methods and style of Hellenistic philosophy into Islam. It is said to have started with Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā [699-749] who disagreed with Ḥasan al-Baṣrī [642-728] over the issue of whether a grave sinner could be classified as a disbeliever or not and withdrew from his gatherings and established his own. The teachings of the Mu'tazilites were characterized by the concept that rationale determined good and bad while revelation was only a means to substantiate it.

11 4:79

12 22:18

13 2:108

14 Abū Dāwūd, *al-Ḥukm fī Man Irtadda*

العشرون

## Chapter Twenty

# Debasing the Friends of Allah ﷻ

*This last chapter* which is about debasing the Predecessors is the most important of all the previous chapters. The Predecessors includes all the scholars, the hadith masters, the jurists, and the Ṣūfiyā. Allah says:

وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنْصَارِ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُمْ بِإِحْسَانٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتَهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

> *And the first to embrace Islam of the Emigrants and the Helpers and also those who followed them exactly (in Faith). Allah ﷻ is well-pleased with them as they are well-pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise), to Dwell therein forever. That is the Supreme success.*[1]

Many aḥādīth from *al-Durr al-Manthūr* help explain this aya. One such hadith is by Imam Auzā'ī. He says,

> Yaḥyā ibn Kathīr, Qāsim, Makḥūl, 'Abda ibn Abī Labāba, and Ḥasan ibn Abī 'Aṭiyya narrate that they heard from a large group of Ṣaḥāba ﵃ that, "When this aya was revealed the Blessed

> Prophet ﷺ said, "This is for my community and after Allah's ﷻ pleasure there is no wrath."

And the Ṣūfiyā who have attained iḥsān are also included in this aya amongst 'those who followed them exactly (in Faith)' and are thus also amongst those who have achieved the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. This point has been explained extensively in *al-I'tidāl.* Regarding the matter of debasing the predecessors, I will only say this much that those who dedicate their time and efforts to finding faults of the scholars and enjoy doing so, hurt no one more than themselves. And if they could hurt the scholars they criticize, the most they can do is deprive them of worldly gains or of dignity and respect, all of which are transient and insignificant. And this of course is only if they have the power to change whatever is written in their [the scholars'] destiny. In essence, their prejudices and criticism of the scholars backfire on them and does no harm to the scholars.

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "He who has no respect for our elders, is not kind to our children, and does not hold our scholars in esteem is not from amongst us."[2]

Imagine that a person claims he is from the community of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ but the Blessed Prophet ﷺ wants nothing to do with him. In another hadith the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Those who carry the revelations are the friends of Allah ﷻ." In another hadith, the Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "The holders of the Qur'an are the friends of Allah ﷻ. Whosoever makes them their enemy makes Allah ﷻ his enemy and whoever makes them his friend makes Allah ﷻ his friend."[3]

In a glorified hadith [*al-ḥadīth al-qudusī*] of *Bukhārī*, Allah ﷻ says, "I declare war upon the one who troubles my friend."[4] Khaṭīb Baghdādī narrates from Imam Abū Ḥanīfa and Imam Shāfi'ī that, "If the jurists and scholars are not the friends of Allah ﷻ then nobody is a friend of Allah ﷻ." 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ says, "Anyone who hurts a jurist hurts the Blessed Prophet ﷺ."

Ḥāfiẓ Abū al-Qāsim Ibn 'Asākar advises,

> O my brother, listen closely! May He grant you and I the ways to achieve His pleasure, and may He include us amongst the people who fear Him as is His right to be feared. I have heard that backbiting of the scholars is extremely poisonous, and we know how Allah ﷻ exposes the weaknesses and faults of one who ridicules them. It is the way of Allah ﷻ that He exposes the faults of those

> who ridicule the scholars and corrupts the hearts of those who loosen their tongue against them.

Shaikh ʿAbd al-Ḥayy writes in his *Fatāwā*,

> The jurists mention that one who swears at the friend of Allah or scholars of Dīn due to his contempt for knowledge is a disbeliever. If it was for another reason he will be a grave sinner at the very least and will be deserving of the wrath of Allah in this world and in the Hereafter.

He further corroborates this with the statements of the jurists, ayas of the Qur'an, and the aḥādīth.

In brief, those who debase the friends of Allah harm themselves more than anyone else. This is something clearly proven in the aḥādīth and the decrees of the jurists. Those who can take out time are encouraged to read *al-Iʿtidāl* in this matter.

## 'THEIR CROOKED IS ALSO STRAIGHT'

One of the helpers of Shaikh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī often had clairvoyance of the graves. He sat in the cemetery [by my father's[5] grave] and then came for condolences and gave me three messages from my father.

First he said, "I am not in debt so do not worry." I was very concerned about my father's debt of 8000 rupees. The second day after he died, I consulted with my uncle Shaikh Ilyās and then decided to send a postcard to each of my father's creditors stating that my father had passed away and that I take responsibility for whatever he owed you.

At the time, my shaikh, Shaikh Sahāranpūrī, was in Ḥijāẓ. He did not like what I wrote to the creditors. He said it would have been better if I had written, "My father has left an inheritance of books [Shaikh Zakariyyā's father owned a bookstore]. You may take whatever he owed you in books."

The second message he sent was, "Do not worry about so and so person. His criticism did not harm me but in fact was detrimental for him." My father was referring to a person [who was a teacher in Maẓāhir al-ʿUlūm where Shaikh Zakariyyā's father and later where Shaikh Zakariyyā himself taught] who hated my father and always looked for ways to

denigrate him. I was worried that he would continue in this manner but then I myself saw the consequences of his enmity for my father. He was deposed from his position and Shaikh Sahāranpūrī eventually expelled him from the school.

The third message was, "Be fearful of the friends of Allah ﷻ for their crooked is also straight." Being young and a student I could not understand how something crooked could be anything but crooked, regardless of whether it came from a friend of Allah ﷻ or a worldly person.

Ten years later, in 1335/1917, I was doing research for the book *Bazl al-Majhūd* while in Madina. My Shaikh sometimes received petty complaints from people whom I knew very well [that they were lying] about the principal of the school [about matters relating to the school]. At that time, I handled my shaikh's letters and responded to his letters for him.

My Shaikh never gave much attention to the complaints, but as I was responding to his letters on his behalf, I would respond harshly. But in 1335/1917, I was returning from Ḥijāẓ with Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir. Shaikh Sahāranpūrī gave him a letter for the principal which stated, "You are mistreating so and so person. Take special care of him and treat him nicer." Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir gave this letter in my presence to the principal who retorted, "He writes lies, not complaints."Suddenly, Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir became full of anger. It was then that I recalled the message from my father ['be fearful of the pious for their crooked is also straight']. I remember how I had difficulty understanding what that meant. Now as I looked upon Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir, the reality of the statement dawned on me that it was true that the man lied and wrote false complaints. Shaikh 'Abd al-Qādir replied, "You are right. Wrong is wrong, but remember that if the friends of Allah ﷻ ever feel anything against you, though it may be due to an erroneous complaint, it will bring harm to you in one way or another."

After this incident, I saw many times how hurting the friends of Allah ﷻ can put one into hardship. I became fearful after this and reminded my friends, "Do not be proud of being on the righteous and avoid hurting the friends of Allah ﷻ. Always keep your record straight with them as much as possible."

## THOSE WHO DECLARE WAR AGAINST THE FRIENDS OF ALLAH ﷻ

Shaikh al-Islām Ibn Taimiya wrote that in the hadith of *Bukhārī* Allah ﷻ says, "I declare war on one who makes My friend his enemy." He [Ibn Taimiya] writes,

> This is the most authentic hadith about the friends of Allah ﷻ. The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever makes an enemy of the friend of Allah ﷻ has placed himself in the battlefield against Allah ﷻ." In a glorified hadith, Allah ﷻ says, "Whoever ridicules my friend, challenges Me to war. In anger for My friend, I become like a furious lion." This is because the friends believe in Allah ﷻ and befriend Him. They only love whom Allah ﷻ loves and despise who Allah ﷻ despises, and are angry with whom Allah ﷻ is angry. Also, they order what Allah ﷻ orders and prohibit what He prohibits.

Shaikh Rashīd Aḥmad Gangohī said, "The faces of those who debase the scholars are turned away from the *qibla* in their graves. Whoever is doubtful may go and see for himself."

This same topic has been discussed in *al-I'tidāl* wherein it says that the glorified hadith,

مَنْ عَادَى لِي وَلِيًّا فَقَدْ آذَنْتُهُ بِالْحَرْبِ

I declare war on he who makes an enemy of My friend.

is narrated by Abū Huraira ؓ in *Bukhārī,* and also by 'Ā'isha ؓ, Maimūna ؓ, Anas ؓ, and Abū Imāma ؓ. Wahab ibn Munabba says, "I read a verse in the Psalms of David [Zabūr] in which Allah ﷻ says, 'I swear by My honor and majesty, whoever debases My friend has prepared himself for war with Me.'"[6]

The Blessed Prophet ﷺ said, "Jibrā'īl ؑ narrates that Allah ﷻ says, 'Whosoever debases my friend, has prepared himself for war with Me. In my love for My friends, I am enraged like a furious lion.'"[7]

It is still bearable if one's ears are cut, his eyes gouged, and arms and legs dismembered for debasing the friends of Allah ﷻ for the pains and

tribulations of this world will come to an end and the doors of repentance are still open. But what is one to do if his īmān is destroyed? The scholars say that besides dealing in usury and debasing the friends of Allah تعالى, no other sin is mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunna which incites war with Allah تعالى. This is a clear indication of the graveness of these two sins and that any person involved in any one of them may die in disbelief.

The author of *Maẓāhir al-Ḥaqq* writes, "The declaration of war indicates an unfavorable death. It is the greatest wish of every Muslim to gain the eternal blessing of Allah تعالى to die as a Muslim. You can only imagine how destructive a matter must be which leads to death in disbelief."

To hold contempt for the Ṣūfiyā who establish the Sunna, destroy the innovations, especially those who are also great scholars of Dīn and are pious, and who are keepers of the esoteric meanings, is a disaster. In Islam, the threat against one who deals with the friends of Allah تعالى in this way is dangerous. What a formidable position to be in war with Allah تعالى.

When a person becomes hostile towards the friends of Allah تعالى it is clear proof that such a person is full of defiance of Allah تعالى. It is most likely that such a person will die in disbelief.

Shaʿrānī writes in *Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*,

> Imam Abū Turāb Nashabī, one of the greatest of the Ṣūfiyā, says, "When any person becomes defiant of Allah تعالى, objections and accusations against the friends of Allah تعالى becomes beloved to him." In other words, any person who loses touch with Allah تعالى becomes accustomed to raising objections against the friends of Allah تعالى.

I have discussed this book at length in *al-Iʿtidāl* in ten to twelve pages. Where loving the friends of Allah تعالى is the most effective antidote hating them is the most deadly poison. I always advise my friends that there are many ways of serving the Dīn and participating in every single one of them is difficult: becoming a hadith master, jurist, gaining taqwā, performing a lot of optional ṣalāt, to fast continuously, etc. But if a person develops love for the friends of Allah تعالى then by the rule mentioned in the hadith that,

الْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ اَحَبَّ

A man will be with whom he loves.[8]

He will attain a great portion of reward as if working in each one of these fields of Dīn [as all those who served the Dīn in different capacities were all friends of Allah ﷻ].

وآخر دعوانا الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام علي سيد المرسلين و

خاتم النبيين و حبيب رب العالمين و علي اله و اصحابه و اتباعه اجمعين

برحمتك يا ارحم الراحمين

*And our final supplication is that all praise is due to Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds, and may His eternal peace and blessings be upon the Master of the Messengers, the Seal of the Prophets, the Beloved to the Lord of the Worlds, Muhammad ﷺ, and upon his family and companions, and all those who followed him, with Your Mercy, O Most Merciful of the Merciful.*

*Completed before Maghrib on the day of Jumuʿa on the 11th of Jumāda al-Awwal 1397 [April 29th 1977] in the Masjid of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ-Muḥammad Zakariyyā, may he be pardoned.*

## ENDNOTES

1 9:100

2 *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, 3/179

3 *Kanz al-'Ummāl*, 1/515

4 Bukhārī, *al-Tawāḍu'*

5 Shaikh Muḥammad Yaḥyā Kāndhelwī (1871-1917) was Shaikh Zakariyyā's father. He was appointed by his shaikh, Shaikh Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī, to teach the books of hadith after he [Shaikh Khalīl Aĥmad] migrated to Ḥijāz. Throughout his life he taught hadith and recited one Qur'an daily for six months after he memorized Qur'an at the age of seven [approximately 464 Qur'an]. He possessed the rare ability of being able to recite Qura'n while doing any work without stumbling in his recitation.

6 *al-Mu' jam al-Ausaṭ*, 1/192

7 *Kanz 'Ummāl*, 1/231

8 Bukhārī, *'Alāmatu al-Ḥubb fi Allāh*

## Appendix I

# FIQH TERMINOLOGY

1 The general [*ʿāmm*] is defined as a word which applies to many things, not limited in number, and includes everything to which it is applicable.

2 The specific [*khāṣ*] is defined as a word which is applied to a limited number of things, including everything to which it can be applied, whether it be one or two or a hundred.[1]

3 The homonym [*mushtarak*] is a word which has more than one meaning.[2]

4 The interpreted meaning [*mu'awwal*] is the meaning which is derived after a careful study of the word usage and its context and other such helpful signs by which the single meaning of that word can be discovered.

The manifest [*ẓāhir*] is a word which has a clear meaning and yet is open to interpretation [*ta'wīl*].

Another type of manifest is the *naṣṣ,* the only difference between the two being that the latter does not constitute the dominant theme of the text whereas the *naṣṣ* does.

The unequivocal [*mufassar*] is a word whose meaning is completely clear and is, at the same time, in harmony with the context in which it appears.

The transparent [*muḥkam*] is a word or words whose meaning is clear and beyond doubt and not open to interpretation [*ta'wīl*].[3]

The obscure [*khafī*] denotes a word which has a basic meaning but is partially ambiguous in respect of some of the individual cases to which it is applied.

The difficult [*mushkil*] denotes a word which is inherently ambiguous, and whose ambiguity can only be removed by means of research and ijtihād.

The ambivalent [*mujmal*] denotes a word or text which is inherently unclear and gives no indication as to its precise meaning.

The intricate [*mutashābih*] denotes a word whose meaning is a total mystery.[4]

1 The literal [*ḥaqīqī*] is a word used in its primary and original meaning.

2 The metaphorical [*majāz*] is when a word is taken from its original meaning and transferred to a secondary one on grounds of a relationship between the two meanings.

3 The plain [*ṣarīḥ*] is the application of a word as such that it clearly discloses the speaker's intention

4 The allusive [*kināya*] denotes a form of speech which does not clearly disclose the intention of its speaker.[5]

The explicit meaning [*'ibārat al-naṣṣ*] is the immediate meaning of the text which is derived from the obviousness of the words.

The allusive meaning [*ishārat al-naṣṣ*] is not obvious in the text but which is understood concomitantly and rationally through deep analysis of indications therein.

The inferred meaning [*dalālat al-naṣṣ*] is derived from the spirit of the text though it may not be indicated in its words. Unlike the explicit and allusive meaning the inferred meaning is derived through analogy by way of an effective cause [*'illa*] that is common between the explicit and meaning that is derived through inference.

The required meaning [*iqtiḍa' al-naṣṣ*] is the meaning on which the text itself is silent and yet which must be read into it if it is to fulfil its proper objective.[6]

## ENDNOTES

1 Kamālī, Muḥammad Hāshim. *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 104

2 Ibid, 119

3 Ibid, 91-97

4 Ibid, 99-102

5 Ibid, 116-118

6 Ibid, 125-128

# Appendix II

# Hadith Terminology

**A Reversed Hadith** [*Maqlūb*]

This hadith denotes a reverse in the name of two narrators.

**A Disrupted Hadith** [*Muḍtarib*]

This hadith denotes a disruption in the chain of transmission [*sanad*] or wording [*matan*] of a hadith which may come in the form of a change or confusion in the wording of the hadith and/or change or confusion in a narrator within the chain of transmission.

**A Dot-Distorted Hadith** [*Muṣaḥḥaf*]

A dot-distorted hadith denotes an omission or addition of a diacritical point in a word within the wording [*matan*] of a hadith.

**A Vowel-Distorted Hadith** [*Muḥarraf*]

A vowel-distorted Hadith denotes an omission or addition of a diacritical mark in a word within the wording of the hadith.

**Attribution of a Narration to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ** [*Marfūʿ*]

is when the hadith is transmitted in ascending order to the Blessed Prophet ﷺ.

**Attribution of a Narration to a Companion** ؓ [*Mauqūf*]

is when a hadith is transmitted in ascending order to a Companion ؓ of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ. Attribution of a hadith to any of the First Successors to the Companions ؓ [*Tābiʿīn*] of the golden era [*khair al-qurūn*] [*mauqūf*]—is when the hadith is

transmitted in ascending order to the First Successors who came immediately after the Companions ﷺ.

**An Authoritative Transmission** [*musnad*]

is when each narrator asserts hearing the hadith directly from his teacher throughout the chain.

**An Absolute High-ranking Transmission** [*al-ʿAluww al-Muṭlaq*]

is a hadith whose chain of transmission reaches the Blessed Prophet ﷺ in ascending order and contains the smallest number of narrators of all the chains of transmission of that hadith.

**A Relative High-ranking Transmission** [*al-ʿAluww al-Nasabī*]

is a hadith whose chain of transmission reaches one of the great imams of hadith [as in Shʿuba, Mālik, Sufyān al-Thaurī] in ascending order and which contains the smallest number of narrators of all the chains of transmission of that hadith.

**One type of relative high-ranking narration** [*al-ʿAluww al-Nasabī*]

is the conforming narration [*al-Muwāfaqa*] in which the narrator transmits the hadith from the teacher of one of the great imams of hadith through a different narrator. In this way, he conforms with the great imam on arriving at the same teacher for that hadith.

**The Equal Transmission** [*al-Musāwāt*]

If the number of narrators between the narrator to the end is the same as that of another chain of transmission of the same hadith from anyone of the imams of hadith [*Bukhārī*, *Muslim*, *Abū Dāwūd*].

**The Handshake Transmission** [*Muṣāfaḥa*]

is a sub-type of the equal transmission [*al-Musāwāt*] except that the number of narrators in one chain is the same as another chain until the student of the imam who is transmitting the same hadith with a different chain. In this way, the narrator of the first chain is transmitting the same hadith from the imam as the student but with a different chain of transmission. Since the narrator met the imam it is called the handshake transmission [*Muṣāfaḥa*] because when people meet they also shake hands.

**A Descending Transmission** [*Nuzūl*]

is the longest chain of transmission in any hadith.

**A Contemporary Transmission** [*Aqrān*]

When a narrator transmits a hadith from a narrator who is of the same age group, met the same teachers of aḥādīth, and transmitted hadith from the elders like himself.

**The Reciprocal Transmission** [*Mudabbaj*]

The reciprocal narration [*Mudabbaj*] is a sub-type of a contemporary narration [*Aqrān*] in which both narrators are contemporaries, the only differerence being that in the reciprocal narration [*Mudabbaj*] both narrators transmit hadith from each other.

**Transmission of the Elders from the Younger** [*Riwāyat al-Akābir 'an al-Aṣāghir*]

If a narrator transmits a hadith from one who is younger than him in age, of a lower caliber or lower level in his knowledge and sharpness in memorization of aḥādīth.

**The Preceder and the Follower Transmission** [*Al-Sābiq wa al-Lāḥiq*]

When two narrators transmit from the same teacher and one dies before the other.

**The Faithful Transmission** [*Musalsal*]

When the wording used by each narrator in a chain to describe the transmission of the hadith from his teacher is the same throughout the chain.

**The Unified Transmission** [*Muttafiq*]

is when the names of the narrators and the narrator's fathers are the same in a chain.

**The Differential Transmission** [*Muftariq*]

is the opposite of the the Unified Transmission [*Muttafiq*] in that the names of the narrators and the narrator's fathers are different.

**The Concordant Transmission** [*Mu'talif*]

is when the names of the narrators are spelled and pronounced the same in a chain.

**The Discordant Transmission** [*Mukhtalif*]

is when the names of the narrators are spelled the same but pronounced differently.

**The Resembling Transmission** [*Mutashābih*]

is when the names of the narrators in a chain are spelled and pronounced the same but the names of their fathers are pronounced differently though they are spelled the same.

تم بحمد الله

How did Islamic law develop?
What are the foundations of Islamic jurisprudence?
What is the relationship between Shari'a and Ṭarīqa?
What is *taqlīd* and does it still hold relevance in our time?
Which sciences must be mastered before one can interpret Qur'an or Ḥadīth?

*Shari'a and Ṭarīqa* is an essential book for anyone wishing to understand the foundations and application of Islamic law, and the relationship that purification of the heart has with traditional Islamic jurisprudence. The esteemed author, in this, his last and final work, draws evidence from the Qur'an, Sunna, Pious Predecessors, past and recent scholars, history, and rationale to clarify the confusion many have when searching for a true scholar of Islam. This book explains how many of the controversies and sectarianism within the ummah today are born out of ignorance of both Shari'a and Ṭarīqa.

SHAIKH AL-ḤADĪTH MUḤAMMAD ZAKARIYYĀ KĀNDHELWĪ was born in 1897 in Kāndhla, U.P. [India]. He was privately tutored by his father, Shaikh Yaḥyā, in the Islamic sciences and completed the six books of hadith with him. He dedicated his life to the teaching and writing of hadith. He worked under his shaikh, Khalīl Aḥmed Sahāranpūrī, to complete the eighteen volume commentary of *Abū Dāwūd* and later himself wrote the monumental twenty-three volume commentary of *Muwaṭṭa' Imām Mālik* over a span of thirty years. His other famous books are *Faḍā'il-e-A'māl, Khaṣā'il-e-Nabawī* [commentary of *Shamā'il al-Tirmidhī*], and *al-Abwāb wa al-Tarājum* [explanation of the chapters of *Ṣaḥiḥ al-Bukhārī*]. He began teaching the Islamic sciences at the age of twenty and taught hadith for 46 years [1923-1969].

He remained in the company of his shaikh, the hadith master, Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī, for seventeen years until his shaikh's death in 1927. He was granted successorship [*khilāfa*] by his shaikh in 1925.

Hundreds of devotees would come from around the world to benefit from his spiritual company during the month of Ramadan. In his later years, despite being incapacitated by sickness and old age, he continued to travel to different countries in order to revive the *dhikr* [remembrance] of Allah ﷻ. His last Ramadan was spent in South Africa. His successors continue his legacy and many, by his order, have gone on to establish Islamic schools in many different parts of the world. He passed away [as he desired] in the blessed city of Madina in 1982 and is buried in *Jannat al-Baqī'* [the graveyard adjacent to the masjid of the Blessed Prophet ﷺ].

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